

Psalm 25:6-7

Dear Friends in Christ,

James Hewett wrote:

A nine-year old who had leukemia was given six months to live. When the doctor broke the news to her parents outside her hospital room, the youngster overheard the doctor's words. But it did not become obvious until later that she knew about her condition. To everyone's surprise, her faith in Christ gave her an attitude of victory. She talked freely about her death with anticipation in her voice. As she grew weaker, it seemed that her joy became more radiant. One day before she sank into a final coma, she said to her family. "I am going to be the first to see Jesus! What would you like me to tell Him for you?" (James S. Hewett, Illustrations unlimited, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois, 1988, pp. 149,150)

Based on our text for this morning, I want to talk to you about . . .

WHAT WE WANT FROM GOD

I. To Remember His Mercy.

The 25th Psalm is a Psalm of King David. The sixth verse states: "Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old." The first "want" we want and need is God's mercy. The Small Catechism simply defines mercy this way: "full of pity."

Dr. Francis Pieper, in the second volume of his "Christian Dogmatics" wrote the following:

"God's mercy is elicited by the misery of man; our misery touches God's heart and moves Him to act...

"...the divine mercy, revealed in Scripture, transcends the (unbeliever's thinking)... For no one is moved to pity by the supplications of [someone who murders a parent] or (a) traitor... God, however, is merciful to those who deserve their sufferings." (Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, Vol. II, Saint Louis, CPH, 1951, p. 8)

This is such a powerful insight: "God, however, is merciful to those who deserve their sufferings." And some, looking at his statement, might cry out, "How could God possibly have pity on someone who murders or is a traitor?" That's a very dangerous question for anyone to ask! To ask such a question implies that the person asking is free from judgmental and very cruel thoughts about others; free from hatred, vices, lying and slander; free from regretful decisions.

The fact that most of humanity hates and rejects the Word of God is understandable. They are the only way to justify perversion, obliteration of the marriage bond, murder of the unborn, and the want of violence and dissipated living. The hatred of the Word is proof enough that it speaks with authority and strikes a shrill chord for those justifying what should never be justified. Paul writes in the Book of Romans:

"None is righteous, no, not one... All have turned aside; together they have become worthless, not one does good, not even one... Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness... in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Portions of 3:10-18)

“Not one does good!” How about, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” This is me! You! You see? We repeatedly experience the conflict and turmoil of sin and guilt in our lives. We want a lot of things. Oh, man, we want so much! But what we should want and do need above all things is God’s mercy. Pity for we who deserve our sufferings. And so, we pray with David, “Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.”

II. To Remember Not Our Sins.

David says, “Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions (that is, my rebellious ways)...”. (v. 7) Does that strike a chord? Why is it that the older generation warns the younger about wasting life pursuing wasted ways and thinking? Because we remember our youth! I don’t know the author, but the quote is worthy: “There is a super myth going around that young people today know more than their elders. The fact is that everything young people know, they have learned from their elders.” Good or bad!

Again, David says, “Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions...”. The plea would follow him into adulthood; especially his relationship with Bathsheba and his plotting to have her husband killed in battle...murdered! It was this great king whom God brought to his knees in repentance and had him declare, “The Sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

Remember not our sins and transgressions. It is this same David whom God would comfort and have him write: “

He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgression from us.” (Ps, 103:10-12)

Dear brothers and sisters, all this He does with us and for us. And this is what we want from God: To Remember Not Our Sins. I don’t want Him to give me what I deserve. I want Him to forget it. I want Him . . .

III. To Remember His Steadfast Love.

“According to (His) steadfast love remember me, for the sake of (His) goodness...”. (v.7) And this He does: Remembers His mercy - remembers **not** our sins - remembers His steadfast love. All of it coming to us through our Lord Jesus Christ’s life, suffering, death and resurrection - His satisfying God’s demands for our criminal, damning sins and securing our forgiveness and assurance of eternal life. Dr. Pieper wrote:

The love of God expresses the wonderful fact that God’s heart is attached to the sinners, longs for communion with them, and delivered His only-begotten Son into death for them. God is the greatest Philanthropist (the One taking *active effort to promote human welfare*). (And then he cites the following from Martin Luther) This philanthropia, love of mankind, embraces all that is called man, no matter how lowly he is... God presents Himself in the Gospel to us in a manner altogether lovely and friendly, adapts Himself to all, rejects no one [God so loved the world], passes over all our defects, and repels no one with severity. (Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, Vol. II, pp. 8-9)

This must always be our focus: “God presents Himself in the Gospel...rejects no one, passes over all our defects, and repels no one with severity.” However, the individual can reject God’s love in Christ. And for this there is no pardon - no forgiveness - no eternal life - no peace. Forever! As Jesus said, “Whoever believes in him (Christ) is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son” (Jn. 3:18)

In this 25th Psalm, David called out saying "Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish. Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins." (vv 16-17) In Christ, God answered David's prayer. In Christ, He answers ours. Our troubles and anguish are the result of sin. In Christ God forgives our sin and works all things to good.

I was 14 years old when I came to very hard terms with the horror of death and the real possibility that I might not live to be the age I am today. The reality of death and the unknowns of tomorrow were vividly there from that point on - right to this very moment.

As adults, we often excuse our young ones from understanding the clarity and presence of death and the unknowns with the familiar cliches of "Well, they've got a lot of living to do." - or, "These things are so negative." - or, "These are things they will confront later when they can handle them better." (which most often doesn't happen in adult years) - or "We want them to have positive thoughts and input!" And please listen: that statement demeans the purpose of God's love in Christ.

Speaking for the pastors, we want everyone here to go to heaven when we die. That's the most important issue. We want everyone here to be confident of that. We want everyone to be like the nine-year old girl in the incident I related to you at the beginning of the sermon. We want everyone to live and die in joyful anticipation of, "I'm going to see Jesus!"

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

September 2, 2018

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“What We Want From God”

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- II. To Remember Not Our Sins*
- III. To Remember His Steadfast Love.*

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