

Introduction Today we celebrate our church's 107th anniversary. And we have begun the first task of the Intentional Interim process, which is the task of reflecting on our history. Do these things seize your interest? Your answer may depend, at least in part, on what you think about history in general. Do you stand with the manufacturer Henry Ford, who declared that "history is bunk"? Or with the philosopher George Santayana, who said that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it"? Or are you somewhere in between?

But there is a more important factor than our personal opinion of history if we are followers of Jesus Christ. Our God is a God who is at work in history, and who will eventually bring all history to his conclusion. And the Bible is full of history. The first 17 books of the Old Testament are all either historical in character or contain significant amounts of history, and the first 5 books of the New Testament also contain much history. And one of the important words of the Bible is the word "remember". Hence my title this morning.

What Do We Need to Remember?

We need to remember the story of God's people as recorded in the Bible. And we need to begin with the story of God's Old Covenant people in the Old Testament, especially the story of the Exodus, the story of how God brought his people out of captivity in Egypt and into the Promised Land. God's Old Covenant people were commanded to remember this story every year by celebrating the Passover - ***read Exodus 13:8-10***. In addition to this yearly act of remembrance, God's people are repeatedly reminded of this great event in the pages of the Old Testament. Today's Bible reading (Psalm 105) is one example, and ***Deuteronomy 7:17-19*** is another.

The Old Testament story belongs not only to God's Old Covenant people but also to God's New Covenant people, to us. Both Jesus and the writers of the New Testament refer frequently to the Old Testament, including to the stories of the Old Testament. Sometimes they speak directly of the importance of these stories for Christians. For example, Paul tells the Christians of Corinth, a majority of whom were Gentiles, that the Israelites in the wilderness were their forefathers and that the story of their disobedience belongs now to the Corinthians as a warning - ***read 1 Corinthians 10:6,11***.

But as Christians we also have the New Testament story, especially the story of Jesus, and within his story especially his death and

resurrection. Just as the Old Testament continually reminds its readers of the Exodus, so the New Testament continually reminds us of Jesus' death and resurrection. Take for example Paul's words in 2 Timothy - **read 2 Timothy 2:8-9,14**. And we have the Lord's Supper as a continual reminder of Jesus' death for us, an act which Jesus himself commanded his disciples to do in remembrance of him.

Jesus Christ's story is our greatest, our central, story. But the Book of Acts tells us that the story of the people of Jesus Christ is also important. And although Acts closes the divinely inspired record of Christ's people, it doesn't mark the end of their history or of the story of God's faithfulness to his people. God has been faithful to his people over many centuries. God has been at work in the lives of many individuals and many churches, including this church.

How and Why Do We Need to Remember?

We need to remember the history of God's people in such a way as to give thanks to our faithful God, and to rejoice in God's faithfulness. This is the character and purpose of Psalm 105, which has been read this morning. This is also the character and purpose of many of the hymns and songs we sing. Think, for example, of "Great is Thy Faithfulness", and "The God of Abraham praise", which we have sung this morning.

And we need to remember in such a way as to strengthen our faith. This is the character and purpose of the listing of Old Covenant people of faith in Hebrews 11, as we can see from what follows in **Hebrews 12:1-3**. This is true also of the way in which we re-tell many Bible stories, and can be true of the way in which we recall the faith of people whom we have known.

We also need to be prepared to learn from what we remember, whether what is recorded in the Bible or later stories. Many of the biblical stories are written in such a way as to invite those who hear them to learn from them. This is particularly clear in the Book of Deuteronomy, for example in these verses from Chapter Eight - **read Deuteronomy 8:15-18**. Such learning includes learning from stories of sin and failure, as with the record of the actions of many of the kings of Israel and Judah. As a church we can learn from both the good stories in our history and the sad stories also.

And such learning needs to go beyond our heads to our hearts and our hands. James says this with particular strength - **read James 1:22-**

25. In this, of course, he is echoing thing which Jesus himself said, such as the words recorded in ***Matthew 7:24.***

Conclusion

Here at Eastwood Baptist Church we can reflect on 107 years of history, as we have just begun to do. So let us reflect with thankfulness toward our faithful God. Let us reflect so as to strengthen our faith, having confidence that our God is no less faithful today than in the past, and no less able to do great things for and through us his people. Let reflect so as to learn from our history, from both stories of achievement and blessing and stories of struggle and even failure. And let us be us ready not only to learn but to act on what we learn. Let us resolve this morning to serve our faithful God faithfully together.