Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Sometimes at the end of a prayer in church, whoever is leading the prayer will say, “And all God’s people said…” and then we all say, Amen. Well, I remember having a conversation with an elder many years ago who did not like it. He saw it as an innovation, a change, a kind of new fad. Well, as we see in the last verse of our Psalm, it is not new. In fact, we first see it in the Bible way back in Deuteronomy 27. And there was a congregational amen to one of David’s prayers in 1 Chronicles 16 and it is discussed in relation to teaching and prayers and songs in 1 Corinthians 14. So, adding a congregational Amen to prayers and songs is nothing new and it is very biblical. It is a way for us all to say, I agree, this is true, and I commit myself to do what I have heard. And if it was good enough for God’s Old Testament people to add an Amen to the end of this Psalm, then we should do it at the end of this sermon.

But first we have to do some work together. This is the final sermon of our series looking at the indirect Messianic Psalms. And the Indirect Messianic Psalms are Psalms that the Lord Jesus did not quote, or that do not have an obvious and direct fulfilment in some episode in His life. But they still point to Him, somehow. And we have seen that there are three types of indirect Messianic Psalm: Psalms of **Orientation**, which are general celebrations of God and the blessings of life, Psalms of **DISorientation**, which are about seasons of turmoil and crisis, and Psalms of **REorientation**, which celebrate God’s deliverance from some specific crisis or turmoil. And last time we considered a thanksgiving Psalm of REorientation, Psalm 30, and today we will consider the other type of REorientation Psalm, a Psalm of remembrance.

And I hope that this has been a helpful sermon series. I have really enjoyed being in these Psalms and preparing these sermons. They have deepened my love for the Psalms because they magnify God and proclaim salvation in Christ and speak to every situation in the believer’s life.

So, what is this Psalm of Remembrance about? What did Psalm 106 say to its original hearers and readers? And what does it say to us today? Well, **Psalm 106 calls sinful believers to praise the Lord for His Steadfast Love**. And we will see how it does this as we once again consider the **setting** of the Psalm, the **structure** of the Psalm, and finally the **Saviour** in the Psalm.

1. So, we begin with the **Setting** of the Psalm. And here we are thinking about the situation of the original audience and how that speaks to us today.
   1. And the situation of the original audience is easy to see. Verses 7-46 summarize the history of the people of Israel from Egypt all the way through to life in the Promised Land. But in **verse 47**, the people are asking the Lord to “*save [them]*,” to “*gather [them] from the nations*.” So, Psalm 106 is a Psalm of exile. It is the prayer that the Psalmist wanted the people in exile to pray, because it is how they would get back to Jerusalem, where they could once again praise God in the temple. Let me explain what I mean:
      1. Psalm 106 follows on from another Psalm of REorientation, **Psalm 105**. And Psalm 105 reviews the same period of history. But the focus of Psalm 105 is **God’s faithfulness**. It records the many ways that He miraculously delivered His people or provided for them or gave them victory. And it ends with: “*So He brought His people out with joy, His chosen ones with singing. And He gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the fruit of the peoples' toil, that they might keep His statutes and observe His laws. Praise the LORD!*” So, Psalm 105 leaves us expecting the people of Israel to respond to God’s wonderful providences with their grateful obedience. But is that what happened? Is the story of Israel a story of grateful obedience? It is not.
      2. And that is what Psalm 106 acknowledges. It looks at the same period of Israel’s history but the focus is on the **faithlessness or sin of Israel**. And if you look at verse 6 of Psalm 106, the Psalmist is encouraging a **corporate confession of sin**. And corporate means communal or shared. When you are at home and you confess your sins in prayer, that is an *individual* confession of sin. But when we confess our sins here at church on Sundays, that is a corporate confession of sin. So, verse 6 says, “*Both we and our fathers have sinned; we have committed iniquity; we have done wickedness*.” And then the Psalmist records the many times and ways that the current and past generations of Israel had sinned against the Lord. And in making this corporate confession of sin, the Psalmist was teaching the people at least two things:
         1. First, that exile was **deserved**; that what had happened to them was exactly what God said would happen if they stubbornly and repeatedly and unrepentantly sinned in these ways. And you can read this in Deuteronomy 27&28.
         2. But the Psalmist was also teaching them that forgiveness and restoration begins with confession of sin. Many years before this, **Solomon** dedicated the temple, and prayed, Lord, “*if [your people] turn their heart in the land to which they have been carried captive, and repent and plead with you … saying, 'We have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly' … then hear … their prayer and … forgive your people who have sinned against you*.”
         3. So, with Psalm 106, the Psalmist was teaching the people to look to the God who had promised to forgive His people and return them to Jerusalem if they would confess their sins and repent.
      3. Well, after Psalm 106, we get another Psalm of REorientation, **Psalm 107**. It is a celebration of redemption. The prayer of Psalm 106 had been answered; God had restored the people back to the Promised Land. And then the Psalm reviews the same period of Israel’s history, again. But the focus in Psalm 107 is the many rescues and restorations of His people by the Lord.
      4. So, looking at the same period of Israel’s history, Psalm 105 records God’s faithfulness, Psalm 106 confesses the unfaithfulness of the people, and Psalm 107 celebrates the redeeming works of God.
      5. And what unites these three Psalms is the **steadfast love** of God. **Psalm** **105:8** describes God as a God who “*remembers His covenant forever*.” And the covenant is the relationship that God entered into with Abraham and His descendants. And at the heart of this covenant is a Hebrew word ‘hesed.’ It translates into English as “*steadfast love*.” It is God’s promise to show steadfast love to His people. He will not forget them. He will be faithful to them. And He will even listen to them when they have sinned against Him if they confess their sins. And this steadfast love is referred to in **Psalm** **106:1**: “*His steadfast love endures forever!*” We see it also in **106:45**: “*For their sake He remembered His covenant, and relented according to the abundance of His steadfast love.*” And it is referred to **6 times in Psalm 107**! So, the Psalmist is directing the attention of God’s people to the steadfast love of God. Yes, they had sinned, terribly, but in the steadfast love of God there is always hope for repentant sinners! That is the main message of this Psalm/these Psalms.
   2. So, what does this mean for you and me, today? Well, are there any sinners here today? Of course, there are. We “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*,” it says in **Romans 3:23**. And we know so much more than the people of Israel did about God’s steadfast love toward His people. We know who Jesus is and what He did on the cross for us. But still, we sin. And there will be some here today who, like Israel, are caught up in ongoing, stubborn, unrepentant sin. And you might be wondering if there is a way back to God for you? Well, the answer of Psalm 106 is yes, the way back to God is through confession and repentance. Tell Him how you have sinned. Be specific. Resolve in your heart to not commit that sin again. And then focus on the steadfast love of God in Christ Jesus. God will forgive you not because of your efforts but because of Christ’s efforts. It is because of Jesus that His steadfast love to you endures forever.
      1. And congregation, this is **why we include corporate confession of sin in our Sunday services**. We usually do it after we have read a law passage or in the congregational prayer. And we do it because it is necessary for us to be regularly reminded of the reality of sin and its consequences, both horizontal and vertical. But we also need to be regularly reminded of the steadfast, unfailing, sin-conquering, peace-restoring love of God in Christ Jesus.

1. But let’s continue in the second place to look at the **Structure** of the Psalm.
   1. The Psalm begins and ends with the words “*Praise the Lord*!” And those words translate the Hebrew word, ‘**Hallelujah**.’ Hallelujah means praise the Lord. And it is a lovely thing that pretty much every language in the world has imported hallelujah. And these hallelujahs are part of verses 1 and 48, which are ‘explosions of praise,’ if you like. Even though the major part of the Psalm is confession of sin, God is still glorious and loving and deserving of praise and thanksgiving!
      1. And in terms of our worship services, they follow this pattern. They begin with a call to worship and then our first song is typically a song of praise. And our last song is always a doxology. And doxology means glory word. It is a song where we glorify God by praising Him for who He is and what He has done for us. So, our services also begin and end with a Hallelujah!
   2. In **verse 2**, we have a question: “*Who can utter the mighty deeds of the LORD, or declare all His praise?*” And verse 3 gives us the answer: “*Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times*.” And with these words the Psalmist was looking forward to the time when the people of Israel were back in Jerusalem and living in obedience to the commands of the Lord. Now, we know from the rest of the Old Testament that even though the Lord did bring the people back to Jerusalem, they very quickly fell back into their old patterns of sin. So, later readers of this Psalm would have asked, Is there someone who will observe justice and do righteousness at all times? Is there someone who is qualified to fully declare the praise of God? And the answer of the New Testament is Yes! The Lord Jesus Christ! He is the man of verse 3. But we will come back to that in our third point.
   3. The major section of the Psalm is **verses 6-46**. It is where the history of the faithlessness of the people of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land is laid out in summary form. And we won’t walk through this whole section again. Let’s just look at one of the events described as a typical and sad example of Israel’s sin.
      1. **Verses 16-18** mention **Dathan** **and** **Abiram**. Do you remember that story boys and girls? What Book of the Bible? Numbers. Chapter? 16. They and 250 chiefs challenged the leadership of Moses and Aaron. So, the next day, the 250 chiefs had to bring a censer and Aaron had his censer, and Moses said that the people would see whom the Lord had chosen to lead. And he told the people to move away from Dathan and Abiram and watch what happened. And then the ground under Dathan and Abiram opened and swallowed them and their families and all their goods and then closed over them again. And then fire came out from the Lord and burned up the 250 chiefs. And the censers that they were holding were gathered up and hammered into a covering for the altar to remind the people not to do as they had done. What a powerful lesson! You would think it made a deep impression on the people. But the very next day the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron that *they* had killed those people! Can you believe it! And because of this grumbling, the Lord sent a plague among the people to kill them all, but Aaron quickly offered to the Lord an incense offering, so that only 14,700 died of the plague. And sadly, verses 6-46 are story after story of sin like this.
      2. But congregation, we are not given these stories so that we can look down our noses at the Israelites in horror at their terrible behaviour. No, we are given these stories so that we can see that we are no different than them. We too are rebellious, complaining, discontent, envious, distrusting, and idolatrous. And so, our response ought to be the one described by the hymn-writer: “My hope is built on nothing less that Jesus’ blood and righteousness; no merit of my own I claim, but wholly trust in Jesus’ name.”
   4. But before we move to our third and final point, notice also **verses 4-5**. The Psalmist says, “*Remember me, O LORD, when you show favour to your people; help me when you save them, that I may look upon the prosperity of your chosen ones, that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, that I may glory with your inheritance*.” And what we see here is that the Psalmist understood that **his personal well-being was tied to that of the nation**. He knew that the fulness of the Lord’s blessing would come to him only when the Lord blessed the whole congregation. In fact, I am sure that if we could have asked the Psalmist to choose between going back to Jerusalem by himself now or going back to Jerusalem with all the people in 5 or 10 years’ time, he would not have hesitated to choose the later.
      1. And this speaks volumes to the kind of private Christianity that many people try and practice today. They do not value corporate worship and actively participating in the life of the congregation. They see that as optional or as an extra. They think that they can flourish as a child of God alone.
      2. But **Colossians 2:19** calls on believers to hold “*fast to the Head (meaning Jesus Christ), from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God*.” God’s design for our growth and nourishment is a connection to Christ our head as part of a body – a local congregation.
         1. If you took a kidney or a forearm and you cut it off and disconnected it from the body, what would happen? It would shrivel up and die. It has to be in the body to receive electrical impulses from the brain and blood from the heart.
         2. Well, Christ is the head and the church is His body. We need to be with brothers and sisters in public worship and Bible study to praise God together, and to confess our sins together, and to be refreshed in Christ together. That is God’s design for how we grow and flourish best.
2. Well, that brings us, thirdly and lastly, to the **Saviour** in the Psalm.
   1. A couple of weeks ago, we considered how Jesus is our fully qualified Mediator, in connection with Lord’s Day 6 of the Heidelberg Catechism. Do you remember what the three qualifications were? He must be truly human, truly righteous, and true God. And we saw that He is each of those things. Well, this Psalm points us to Jesus Christ also as our fully qualified Saviour:
      1. For example, as we saw in our last point, **verses 2-3** look forward to someone who can utter the mighty deeds of the Lord and “*declare all His praise*,” who observes justice and does righteousness “*at all times*.”
         1. And that is the Jesus who is set before us in the Gospels. His teaching was perfect, such that it consistently astonished the crowds. He said, “*Whoever has seen me has seen the Father*.” He healed the sick, released the demon-possessed, and raised the dead. He submitted to lawful authority. He resisted every temptation that came to Him. He kept every commandment of God, always. And while the Psalmist encouraged the people to confess their sins, and would have joined them in that confession, Jesus never had any sins to confess. **Hebrews 4:15** describes Him as “*without sin*.” So, unlike Israel, and unlike you and me, Jesus was truly righteous. But He took all our sins on Himself and went to the cross to endure the punishment that those sins deserved. He endured the covenant curses so that God could show us His steadfast love.
      2. And throughout the Psalm, we see mention of human beings like **Moses and Aaron**.
         1. In **verse 16**, Aaron is called “*the holy one of the Lord*.” And we heard earlier about how he offered incense to the Lord, which the Lord accepted in place of the death of all the people. But **verse 19** refers to the golden calf incident. And who was it who made the calf for the people, boys and girls? It was Aaron. So, Aaron was a sinful human being.
         2. And in **verse 23**, Moses is described as God’s “*chosen one*,” who “*stood in the breach before Him to turn away His wrath from destroying them*.” And this refers to a time when the Lord told Moses that He was going to destroy all the people because of their sin, only for Moses to plead with the Lord on behalf of the people, so that the Lord relented. And in this way, Moses was a mediator – he represented God to the people and the people to God. But look down at **verse 32**. There mention is made of what happened at the waters of Meribah. We read, “*It went ill with Moses on their account*.” Do you remember what happened there? The Lord told Moses to speak to a rock, but Moses struck the rock in anger and “*spoke rashly with his lips*.” And the result was that he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. So, Moses too was a sinful human being.
         3. So, what we need is a **better mediator** than Aaron or Moses. And that mediator is the Lord Jesus. For He too was truly human, like Moses and Aaron and you and me, but He was also truly righteous – without sin. And He was true God, so that having died, He rose again, which is the ultimate proof of His qualifications to be our Saviour!

And so, as we draw this sermon series to a conclusion, what we have seen with every Psalm we have looked at is that they are a call to faith; we must believe in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins and the promise of eternal life. We must trust in His finished work on the cross. And we must rest in the steadfast love of our Father in heaven, which is ours in Jesus Christ.

And I want to illustrate this with one last episode from this Psalm. It is the episode we read of in **verses 28-31**. It is a very unpleasant story. But because of the godly action of a man named Phinehas, who was a priest, a plague from the Lord stopped and many lives were saved. You can read all about it in Numbers 25. And we read in verse 31 that what Phinehas did was “*counted to him as righteousness*.” Because of his faith, God declared him a righteous man whose memory would be celebrated for generations afterward.

Well, Phinehas points us to a **greater Phinehas** – the Lord Jesus. We are like the sinful people of Israel who provoke the Lord to anger with our deeds. And the plague we deserve is eternal condemnation in hell. But Jesus stood up and intervened by going to the cross in our place. And He earned for us the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life. And He didn’t earn this just for a few Israelites but for all God’s elect. And we may know this for certain because He rose again. For His resurrection is God’s declaration that the price had been paid in full.

And this is why we read **Romans 4** earlier. For Romans 4 talks about Abraham’s faith “*being counted to him as righteousness*.” And it says that “*the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in Him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification*.” In short, the moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ, God counts you as righteous in His sight.

And believer, in terms of salvation, this is everything! When you look at yourself, what do you see? Do you see perfect obedience? No. Far from it! But when the Father looks at you, what does He see? He sees Jesus and His righteousness! Why, because by faith, He has united you with His Son. It is what **Colossians 3:3** means when it says, “*Your life is hidden with Christ in God*.”

Have you ever had your view of someone hidden by someone else who gets in the way? It is annoying when that happens, isn’t it. But in a far more wonderful sense, Jesus ‘gets in the way’ when the Father looks at you! And thank God that He does! For when the Father sees you, ‘hidden in Jesus,’ He sees you as His beloved son or daughter!

And this, congregation, is what the Psalms invite us to see. As a believer, “*your life is hidden with Christ in God*.” So, “*Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the LORD!*”