Scripture: Psalm 78:1-7 (NRSVUE)

My people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. **2** I will open
my mouth with a parable; I will utter hidden things, things from of old— **3**
things we have heard and known, things our ancestors have told us. **4** We will
not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the
praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. 5 He
decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he
commanded our ancestors to teach their children,
6 so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born,
and they in turn would tell their children. 7 Then they would put their trust in
God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.

Sermon:

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. **2** He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. **3** He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." For many in our congregational family, this scripture, this version, brings a sense of calm, of emotional stability, of comfort, of memories, of loved ones, and the list of reactions could continue. For many years, it was part of the foundation of faith in confirmation classes, where students were asked to memorize it as part of the tradition of faith.

"**4** Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. **5** Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." But why would we spend so much energy on one scripture? Why would it mean so much to us? It's about the comfort, the universal themes, the comfort. No one walks away from it and thinks, "That passage just doesn't make sense." No. God guides and walks with us even in the worst parts of life, and even guarantees eternal life.

Our scripture today, Psalm 78, is a very different kind of psalm from Psalm 23. It is considered a historical psalm. Not necessarily because of its depiction of events, but because it was tradition to pass down the story of God's people orally. This psalm was written as a speech to help teach the Israelite people. To inform, to correct, and nurture the faith of the congregation.

In this Psalm, there isn't just a simple retelling of God's history with God's people, though. There is a teaching not only by what God has done and said, but also what the fathers and mothers in faith did and said. Because let us remember that faith is not simple. We know our Christian faith has withstood many an issue on humanity's end. Historically, we have not been the best listeners or the best at following through.

The legacy of the people of God definitely shaped how God would interact with humanity in the future. In the history of faith and Israel, those who had passed on the tradition of faith also failed it. They left a skewed legacy, if you will. We are blessed in that humanity's failure is not God's failure. The legacy of faith continues.

As a people who were given a legacy, we are invited by theologians (people who spend their careers studying God in many ways) "to make available to subsequent generations the experience and power of the initial astonishment which abides with compelling authority." In other words, we are encouraged to share with others so that they may know the amazingness of God. We are tasked with leaving a legacy as well.

Now, we have talked about legacy before, yet it never seems like a bad time to think about it. As humans, we recognize our mortality. We will not live forever, and it is up to us to make sure that what we do on this earth while we are here furthers the Kingdom of God.

Our scripture reminds us, starting in verse 5, that God "commanded our ancestors to teach their children…, so that the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God." We are asked the same thing.

With every decision we make, inside and outside the church, are we asking ourselves, "Does this leave a legacy that points the next generations to hope through the Kingdom of God?" *As a faith community, are we living into our mission and vision? Do we know what they are?*

Our Mission is "to make new and renewed disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." How are we providing a legacy that MAKES new and renewed disciples of Jesus Christ to transform the world?

Our Vision is "to build a Christian community where we become deeply committed followers of Jesus Christ, who know God with our heads, love God with our hearts, and serve God with our hands." How are we providing a legacy where the Christian community we so eagerly desire for the future is creating deeply committed followers of Jesus?

Now we can recognize that our church does not look like it once did. There are fewer people, an aging congregation, rising costs, and the list could continue. As a larger church institution, we recognize that younger people are less than thrilled about institutions and more passionate about making the world a better place. That doesn't mean we can't build a community where our physical presence and passionate work can be together. That's a legacy.

We've worried about our churches staying open, for us to stay in our buildings. Have we thought about these things for our benefit or for the benefit of our children's children's children?

This month, we are focusing our worship and sermons on planting seeds of hope through a variety of stewardship practices. Stewardship looks like many different things, from finances to action. Let us ponder and pray, especially this All Saints Sunday, about how we may build a legacy that enables future generations to put their trust in God by how we plant the seeds of God's hope. Amen.