

- So, in Psalm 105 Israel is called to remember... *and give thanks*; in Psalm 106 God is called to remember (v4)... *relent, have pity and save* (v46-47).
- The Psalm ends with an extra doxology which signifies the end of Book IV of the Psalms.

**Conversation:** *Together or in small groups.*

1. How important is remembering as a strategy of hope?
2. What is it that we are called to remember?

It feels a strange place to start, but unless we face the past we can't move forward into God's future. As our companion passage from Luke's Gospel this evening, we turn to one of Luke's longest stories; the parable of the prodigal son.

The turning point is when the young man 'comes to his senses'; when he remembers who he is. Let us have the great themes of remembering – both what God has done and what we have done – and God's capacity to remember our sins no more in mind.

### Read Luke 15v11-32

**Prayer:** *All together.*

**Loving God, we thank and praise you that though we forget you, you never forget us; and when we are overwhelmed with the remembrance of our sins, you forgive us, embrace us, and set us once again within your family and in your way. Amen.**

**Next Week:** So, we move on into Book V of the Psalms, characterised by its sense of movement and new possibility. This week – as we enter Holy Week - we'll pray through the Passover Psalms (113-118) and on into the Pilgrimage Psalms (120-134). A pilgrim's blessing upon you until we meet again...

**Blessing:** *"Blessed are you whose strength is in God; who have set your hearts on pilgrimage. As you pass through the driest and darkest valley, may you find it to be a place of springs." (Ps 84v5-6)*

# PRAYING THE PSALMS 2025

## Session VI: Remembering and Hope

**Last Time:** *We took stock of the range of different types of psalms that we've come across so far: Creation, Thanksgiving (both individual and Communal), Hymns of Praise and Trust, Laments (again, both Individual and Communal), Wisdom and Torah, Royal Psalms, and those characterised by a focus on Zion.*

*We then spent time on the link between faith and justice as reflected in the Psalms, and in Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, and on how the psalms can be a resource for 'dethroning the powers'.*

This evening, we have prayed ourselves to a very different place. For this week's psalms have taken us through the bleak despair of Psalms 88 and the final part of Psalm 89, into the burst of new life and hope in God alone that we discover from Psalm 90 onwards.

Today's readings included what is for many the most complete psalm of all; Psalm 103. Whilst not an acrostic, the fact that the Psalm has 22 verses (one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet) supports the sense that it 'kind of says it all.'

The other Psalm set for today was Psalm 104 which is perhaps the greatest Creation Psalm of all.

This evening, we're going to note the place of creation as a key theme of the psalms, before we move on to two psalms which lay before us the importance of remembering.

### Read Psalm 119v89-96 (NIV)

Let us attend to the first three verses that we just read together.  
*"Your word, Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens."  
 (119v89)*

The Psalm makes the link between God's wisdom and God's creation, for - as Psalm 104 reminds us - it was at God's word that the waters were set within boundaries (Ps 104v5-9 and Gen 1v6-13).  
*"Your faithfulness continues through all generations;  
 you established the earth, and it endures." (119v90)*

Psalm 104 celebrates that God not only *created* the earth (Ps 104v24), but that God *sustains* all living things, the grass growing for the cattle to eat, plants for people to use and even wine to gladden the human heart (104v14-15).

Similarly, Psalm 119 affirms:

*“Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you.”* (119v91)

It is not just Israel that is God’s servant, but all things; the clouds are God’s chariot, the winds his messengers, flame and fire his servants (Ps 104v3-4).

**Conversation:** *Together or in small groups.*

What else does Psalm 104 tell us about Creation and our part in it?

We’ll return to the central place of creation in the language and theology of the Psalms in our final session, but for now let’s turn to the first of this evening’s psalms, both of which concern themselves with remembering as a strategy for hope.

### Read Psalm 105

*Arrange, is possible, to have several readers rather than all together.*

*A: 1-11, B: 12-22, C: 23-36, D: 37-end.*

It is interesting to note how the story of God’s relationship with Israel is told:

- David is not mentioned at all.
- It starts and finishes with Abraham (v6 and 42);
- It is this covenant that is described as being everlasting (v8-11); and explicitly included is the promise of the land.

That promise comes with its own dangers, doesn’t it?

It has given rise to the modern-day phenomenon of Zionism, with its claim on the land for Israel alone (a ‘Jewish State’).

This claim on the land is a key part of that sense of ‘chosen-ness’ which we noted as being problematic at the point when it results in claims for privileged status rather than for commissioned service.

We can also see that this claim on the land provides the pretext for authorized violence, within the psalms themselves (eg Ps 136v17-20) and more widely in the Hebrew Bible.

In its long overview of Israel’s history, Psalm 105 bears comparison with Psalms 78, 106 (which we’ll read next), 135 and 136. The latter has a repeated chorus: *“His love endures forever.”*

For each of these ‘historical psalms’ are a celebration of God’s faithfulness. As we read it towards the end of Book IV of the Psalms, we perhaps recognise more clearly that such remembering is a strategy for sustaining hope in circumstances that might otherwise lead to despair; for if God has been faithful to his people in the past – despite our sin – surely, we can hope that God will be faithful in the future.

Verse 5 is key: *“Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles and the judgements he pronounced.”*

Why? The purpose of such remembering is made clear in verse 45: *“... that they might keep his precepts and observe his laws.”*

Therein lies their hope, as we shall see in Psalm 106.

### Read Psalm 106

*Arrange, is possible, to have several readers rather than all together.*

*All: 1-5; A: 6-12, B: 13-18, C: 19-23, D: 24-31, E: 32-39, F: 40-43, All: 44-end*

It is similar... but different to Psalm 105, isn’t it?

- Both Psalms tell the story of God’s dealing with Israel, but Psalm 105 focuses upon the acts of God whereas Psalm 106 focuses upon the acts of Israel, and upon how - at each point - they have sinned.
- Because of Israel’s repeated sin, God was repeatedly angry (v40) and disciplined his people hoping they would change and turn back to God (this is the script of the Deuteronomic interpretation, which we find in the Book of Jeremiah and elsewhere).
- Psalm 106 prefaces all this with an individual petition (v4-5) and a communal confession (v6f), and then follows this recollection of Israel’s repeated sin by stating that each time God took note, heard their cry and *‘remembered his covenant’* (v44-46)