

The more things change, the more we want things to go back to the way they used to be. We see old pictures of ourselves and think, “Oh, that was back in the day.” When our bodies begin to show their age, we reminisce of the good ole days when we were strong, young, and thin. Andy’s dad was a high school football star. Now, he unfortunately suffers from chronic pain from those hits and tackles. Andy’s mom often says, “I wish you could’ve seen him in his glory days.”

The psalmist in our psalm for today looks back on Israel’s glory days. This psalm probably takes places after the Babylonian exile, which was a troubled time in Israel’s history. During this difficult time, they remember their past glories fondly. They reminisce of Israel’s glory days when they were powerful, strong, and favored by God. God had forgiven them of their previous indiscretions and restored them personally and as a nation.

Now, they find themselves lost, scattered, and powerless again. This psalm is a plea for restoration in their present situation. They call on God to speak words of peace and to forgive them and favor them again. By looking back at how God was active and faithful in the past, they call on God to help them again in their current situation.

We do this too as twenty-first century Christians. We are able to look back over three millennia to see how God continues to work in troubled situations. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, we learn how God’s people were brought out of slavery, more than once. The New Testament tells the story of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, which is the good news of

freedom, unconditional love, and the promise of new life. The long, convoluted history of the Church, from the early church to present day, shows us that no matter how many times humans mess it up, God makes it right. God is always creating something new to continue the work of the Church, which explains why there are currently 60 different denominations just in the US.

There may be more in the near future, that could directly affect us. But, looking back on how God has always been faithful and continues to restore people and situations, we have hope that God is working in our current difficult situations. That’s the part of the past that we hold on to, the good that comes out of reflecting on the glory days.

We have to be careful though not to get stuck in the past and be closed off to new things that God is doing. When God restores, God creates something new. We’re changed. We’re not exactly how we were before. So, when we try to recreate how we were in the past or what worked in the past, we miss out on God’s presence in the present. And, so often, that’s when we lose our way.

We were watching *Mary Poppins Returns* last weekend, and there is a scene when the children feel lost. They were trying to help their family’s difficult situation, but ended up making it worse. Their father becomes angry with them, and he sends them home. On their way, they get lost in the fog, which was so thick, they couldn’t see which way to go. They lost their bearings and sense of direction.

One of the children turned to Mary Poppins and asked, “Which way do we go?” She said, “Why would you ask me? The

three of you were leading the way.” The children protested and said they weren’t leading, they were just talking, about what had just happened with their father. Mary Poppins said, “Yes, too focused on where you’ve been, to pay attention to where you’re going.”¹ When we focus too much on the past, we don’t pay attention to the glory days that are right here, right now.

The children then ask Mary Poppins, “Are we lost then?” Jack, the lamplighter overhears their dilemma, and breaks in, “That would depend on where you want to go.” Do we want to be stuck in the past, or do we want to be where God is working in the present? He continues on, “I’m no expert, but if I ever lose my way, I just look for a little light to guide me.”² We can keep our glory days alive in our memories and let them be the light, the remembrance of hope and God’s love, that guides us along the way, so we can see God’s glory days that are happening right now.

The second part of the psalm shows us what God’s glory days look like. They are filled with peace, truth, unfailing love, and goodness. God speaks words of peace into our difficult situations, and truth and righteousness come together, restoring us. Verse 11 says, “truth and faithfulness spring from the earth,” and “righteousness smiles down from heaven. We are “caught in the middle” of God’s glory. God’s glory days are not in the past; they are right now, in the present moment, and we are surrounded by God’s glory all the time.

If we pay attention to God’s glory in the present moment, God’s goodness will go before us and show us the way. When we are personally seeking which way to go and

which way God is leading the Church, we shouldn’t focus too much on what worked in the past. We can reflect on the past as a reminder that God is faithful, that God will restore us. Let us listen to the words of peace that God speaks into our situations today. May we pay attention to God’s glory that surrounds us right now. These are the true glory days!

God of Steadfast Love, we come before you in need of restoration. We are in difficult situations and call to you for help. You have helped us in the past, and we call on you again. Let us hear the words you speak into our situations. Let them be words of peace, words of goodness, words of grace. Help us to be open to your glory right now in the present moment, and surround us with your unfailing love, truth, and righteousness. Thank you for always loving us and restoring us back to health. Thank you for creating something new and leading us along the way. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

¹ *Mary Poppins Returns*, Walt Disney Pictures, 2018.

² *Ibid.*