



WHFC Summer

Part 6 – Great is Thy Faithfulness... And Great is my Forgetfulness

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For those of you that heard Ted a couple of weeks ago, I survived the “Rona.” It gave me everything I wanted and then some, which really ties into the title of today’s message, which is *Great is Thy Faithfulness... And Great is my Forgetfulness*. I’m so prone to forget. So, I have, like many of you, been boxed in and quarantined in for the last five months and have been going crazy in the house. Remember, I have an eight-year-old and a five-year-old and they could put Red Bull out of business if I could bottle their energy. So, being quarantined with them has definitely developed patience in my wife and me.

Finally, I had enough. I had some airline miles and I said, “Baby, I’m taking the boys off the grid. We’re going Jason Bourne style. We’re going to Glacier National Park. No cell phone service, no electricity, no plumbing, nothing, nada, cut off the grid all last week. I just got back two nights ago. It was amazing with just my eight-year-old and five-year-old. We hiked the trails, we saw a grizzly bear, we saw a moose, we saw a bald eagle. We floated the North Fork River. We did guy stuff. I got scratches on my knees... it was awesome.

We were hiking the Avalanche Trail to go see the Avalanche Lake, which is amazing. You get to this Glacier Lake and there are three water falls from glaciers just running into this lake and it’s a different color. It was an unbelievable week. It was just cutting off from all distractions and being with my boys and making memories.

I let them do dude stuff and usually stuff they wouldn’t get to do when mom is around because she’d be like, “Be careful, don’t do that, stop...” I’m like, “Go ahead, break an arm, get some stitches, let’s go, be a man!” They are doing everything they want, and they were falling and tripping and I’m like it’s alright, get up if you’re going to do it, we’ll just keep rolling.

They climb this big bolder and my first one, Aiden, he’s really methodical and thoughtful and careful and thinks through things before he acts. He’s very ready, aim, fire. My five-year-old is very much ready, fire, aim. He doesn’t think, he just goes. The kid is absolutely fearless.

My eight-year-old walks down to the bottom of this bolder after I take this picture – true story. I assume that’s what the five-year-old is going to do as well, so I just start walking to the rest of the trail, which is right here from where I took the picture. Out of the corner of my eye from right here on this edge, I just see Superman jump off the bolder. I’m walking and all the sudden I look up and here comes a five-year-old flying at my head, about 15 to 20 feet off the ground.

I catch him, my heart in my stomach. I'm like, "Anders, what were you thinking?" He says, "You're my daddy; I knew you were going to catch me." You think God didn't preach to me in that moment? Of how many things I've been worried about in the last five months. When is this pandemic going to end? When are things going to get back to normal? God's like, "I'm your Father, I'm going to catch you. I've been faithful, time and time again in your life."

I wanted to kick off this message with a video that just captures the last 100 years. I think it's important because we forget even 100 years from now all that God has faithfully brought us through. Check out this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxC5a7Qrstk>

He's gotten us through. And that's just 100 years and he has been faithful. He got us through World War I, he got us through World War II, he got us through Smallpox, he got us through 9-11, and he's going to get us through COVID-19. He has been faithful; it's never lacking in his faithfulness, it's us that's increasing in our forgetfulness. I think when I remember his faithfulness, my heart and my mind and my soul get to a really good place. And when I forget, the angst and the anxiety and the worry mount. And it is my forgetfulness that forgets to turn to this truth that will help me remember his faithfulness.

I want to look at that with you, but I want to show you guys a map first to give you a little context of a really important book. It's actually Deuteronomy. It's actually the most quoted book in the New Testament. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy more than any other book in the Old Testament and Deuteronomy is the last of the five books in the Tora that Moses wrote.

Deuteronomy was written and broken into three parts. The first part is a sermon that is just all about God's faithfulness while they were wandering in the wilderness. The second part is God's law and commandments that he wants them to follow in following Yahweh. The third is what they should do when they go into the Promised Land. When they are unfaithful, which they will be, just like we will, to remember God's faithfulness, if they'd walk into repentance that he will forgive them.

So, it all started here, right? So, a bunch of God's people, Hebrew slaves, the Israelites, are enslaved in Egypt and God has promised them that he is going to be faithful. He is going to raise somebody up – Moses – and he will come deliver them out of the hand of Pharaoh. So, he delivers these ten plagues, they get out of Egypt, they get chased by Egypt, and they see this unbelievable miracle that you and I have never seen in our lifetime. This huge body of water, called the Red Sea, is parted. They go through the Red Sea and as the Egyptians are chasing them, God covers them up, wipes them out, they're done, and then the Israelites spend 40 years wandering in this wilderness.

While the Israelites are wandering, God is still providing for them. He provides mana from heaven and food and nutrition and everything they need to survive. But in that process, Moses goes up to Mt. Sinai where he is given the ten commandments. He's only gone a couple of weeks when he comes back down, and they are partying, worshiping the golden cow. How quickly they forgot. The God that just parted the Red Sea and did everything he could for them, and they are now partying and worshiping a golden cow. Moses gets mad, breaks the Ten Commandments, goes back up a second time to get the law again from God, and now Moses also gets mad and hits a rock that gushes water out. Because of that God says, "You're going to get to see the Promised Land, Moses, but now you're are not going to

get to go into it. They wander and eventually, they come all the way up by Mt. Nebo, through the Jordan River where Moses is passing the baton to Joshua. Joshua is going to cross the Jordan River and Moses is going to part and be with the Lord and he's done, just like the Lord promised.

But as he does, he writes this book, Deuteronomy. He says, "Hey, before you guys go to this land of milk and honey and affluence and get privilege, I want you to remember all these things. As a matter of fact, I'm going to write them down." It is in Deuteronomy. Remember these things, because if you don't, you're going to be forgetful and it's going to put you in a bad place, it's going to get you a bad spot.

Literally, they go through Joshua and he parts the Jordan River. The River Jordan parts... this is literally in Joshua 4 and he says, "Hey, now that you've parted this, I want you to put twelve stones to remember." So, you see this theme here. God is saying to remember, don't forget, remember my faithfulness. So, they go in, and looking at Deuteronomy 4: 5-10... Watch this.

5 See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. 6 Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." 7 What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him? 8 And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? 9 Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. 10 Remember...

Like literally teach these to your children like what's the most important thing we can be doing in our home. Not talking about sports, not talking about social media, the most important things in our home that we can be talking about to our children and our children's children is this: God's faithfulness. Our biggest danger as people of God is forgetting our story, who we are, and whose we are. And that's exactly what the Israelites did. They went into a Promised Land and they forgot. They forgot who they are and whose they are.

You might think you walked in here today and *I'm an accountant or I'm a teacher or I'm ...* But first and foremost, if you are a male, you are the son of the Most High. And if you are a female, you a daughter of the King. That's who you are and whose you are. And when we forget that we're a daughter of a King, we start comparing ourselves to other people on social media, we start thinking we have to look like this mom or that mom or do these things and we forget that that's not who we are and whose we are. But God's faithfulness continually reminds us that we are already accepted and who he has made us to me.

It goes on to say in Deuteronomy 8, the same first section of the sermon. ***10 When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. 11 Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. 12 Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, 13 and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, 14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God,***

who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. That's entitlement, by the way. They thought somehow, they did this. "I earned this." "I did this." "I accumulated all these things." "I built a great business." "I provided all this money." "I bought the boat." "I bought the car." "I put the food on the table." "I put the roof over your head." That's entitlement. And God says when you do that and you think somehow you are the one providing for yourself and your family, you'll forget. You'll get to place to forget who Jehovah-Jira is, the Lord our Provider. And when you forget Jehovah-Jira, you get to a forgetful, entitled, anxious, worrisome state.

He says, **17 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."** God has produced it. God has provided for you. God is giving you the opportunity. God has placed you here. **18 But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth...** Who gives you the ability? He, God gives you the ability to produce wealth. **...and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.**

Remember this. The enemy loves to distract us because he knows distractions lead to forgetting. One of the best things about being in Glacier Park this last week? I had no cell phone service. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't. And it was so refreshing to my soul to be so present with my boys in every minute of every day to engage with them, to be cut off. I just can't tell you how refreshed my soul was. I told my wife when I got back, "I just need to make more of a habit of doing that." A habit of completely leaving the phone behind, not being distracted, and allowing God to fill me up. It was so replenishing and amazing. I want to try to continually do it just because it's so easy to have a text message or social media or just all those toxic things that we don't even realize they are toxic until we are actually breathing in the freshness of God's Word and his quietness and all the stillness it should be.

Just try it and hit me up and let me know how just two days without your phone goes for your soul. Try me on this and see how refreshed you feel, see how clear minded you feel not looking at any political arguments for two days, not looking at any news for two days, not having to bash anybody online for two days. Just see what it does to your soul. Try me on this and just focus on those two days on God's faithfulness and see what it does for you. God's faithfulness is greater than our fear and forgetfulness. So, maybe you've blown it like I have so many times throughout my life. The crazy thing is no matter how many times I blow it, God is still faithful. No matter how many times I mess up, God is still faithful.

He's faithful, amen? He's never not been faithful. It's us that haven't been faithful. I can't stop thinking about how faithful he is. One of the ways the Donyes home remember his faithfulness... This is literally sitting in my office at my house. This is a board my wife and I created. It's called our remember board because we're prone to forget. It sits on the wall in my office and it just helps me remember times in my life where God has been so unbelievably faithful.

There was a time my wife and I were private school teachers up in Kansas City. Their finances were array and they couldn't pay us for 2 ½ months. I had a mortgage to pay and we were crowded on our couches with these little space heaters because we couldn't pay heat in a cold Kansas City winter. We were eating Ramen Noodles and hot dogs. It was like the best time of our marriage ever. It was awesome because we were just so dependent on God's faithfulness. Then one day, we get a check for

\$2,500.00 in the mail, out of nowhere, unsolicited. She and I just started crying literally in the living room because God provided in a faithful way.

And then we have a miscarriage, but now I have a five-year-old Anders I would never have had if we hadn't had the miscarriage and God is faithful in providing in a different way. Then I had to sell the house because I wanted to start a program called Link Year in the middle of the recession. By the way, don't try to sell a house in the middle of a recession, bad idea. We didn't know how it was going to happen and then an elder of ours, sweet Doug Goodwin, who is a dear friend of mine said, "Hey, we need at least 30 students if we are going to start this link Year program or else we're going to lose money and we can't lose money. We have to at least break even."

The deadline was five days away and we were at number 29. My wife and I worried. I had just put blood, sweat, and tears into this and we were going to move to Branson and cut our salaries in half to start this thing and just trust God. In those five days, two more kids sign up. We called them 31 flavors... Baskin-Robbins that year, baby!

This whole remember board is just full of things of God's faithfulness. We went to the Santa Monica pier and my crazy, courageous five-year-old, who at the time was three, takes off into the arcade and neither one of us know where he, is in the middle of Santa Monica. It was one of the scariest moments in our life. She and I just stopped and prayed. Sure enough, we found him in this little closed curtain arcade.

This board is just so full of God's faithfulness. Why do I have a board in my office? It's because I forget. I forget about God's faithfulness. But he's never not been faithful, and he's never not been faithful to you. Do you know why I know his faithfulness is real in your life? Because you're sitting in here this morning. Because you're here. I know maybe you face cancer and maybe your finances are in array because of COVID-19. He's going to get us through it. He's faithful. He's never not been faithful in our lives,

It goes on in Deuteronomy 6 – ***4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.***

This is the most important thing we should be talking about with our children. He tells us to teach them these things so they don't forget. That's why we lose traditions sometimes because when the matriarch or the patriarch or grandma or great grandpa pass away, we don't carry on the tradition because we stop teaching them the things we should teach them; we lose the faithfulness part. And when you lie down and when you rise, you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they should be as frontless between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorpost of your house and on your gates. We have our family set of pillars right next to my fireplace and we go over them every night at dinner, so we don't forget what our family is all about. It's so important.

Psalms 37:25 says this: **25 I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken...** I love this *righteous*. No one is righteous, not even one. Romans 8 says that. None of us in here are righteous, but for those of you who are in Christ, that righteousness is imputed to you, which means if you've trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, that he died on the cross for you, that when God sees you, he doesn't see all your junk and your forgetfulness and your sin, he sees the righteousness of Christ imputed to you. He doesn't see all your mistakes in your past. He sees the righteousness of Christ in you. That's the beauty of those who are in Christ and understand the beauty of the good news of the gospel. Jesus is our righteousness, not our works. **...I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.** God's faithfulness is not constricted by our timeline.

I get asked all the time, "Man, when is this COVID thing going to stop." I don't know. "Do you think it'll be here next summer." I don't know, but I know his faithfulness isn't constricted by my timeline. Just because it's not happening as fast as I want it to or we're not getting out of this as fast as I want to, that doesn't change God's faithfulness. His timeline is exactly when it needs to be as I know all throughout... Not just the 100 years I showed you at the beginning of this message, but the thousands and thousands and thousands of years that he keeps showing himself to be faithful and true.

His faithfulness doesn't need our timeline. Lamentations 3: 22-23 says, **22 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; we are not cut off; his mercies never come to an end; 23 they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.** God's faithfulness never falters even if our focus on it fades. That Lamentations tells me that it's unconditional; it's every day. His faithfulness is just as great and suffices for your sins today as it did yesterday. His mercies are new every morning, which means there is no timeline on it. When you came to know Jesus, he didn't forgive you at that moment, he forgave you in every moment that would become to where you would need his faithfulness. That is why his faithfulness is great and it never falters even if our focus on it fades. God is and will and always has been and will never stop being faithful.

When I was in Kansas City at that teaching job I was telling you guys about, I got hired to be a basketball coach on top of teaching Bible at this private Christian school. When you're hired to be a head varsity coach, you also need to have an assistant. My superintendent said, "Hey, you might want to find an assistant. It's just part time pay; we're not going to be able to pay the whole thing, so if you could find somebody, that would be great.

The first year of my coaching/teaching, I wasn't married yet. I got married the second year, so I was living in a bachelor pad. This bachelor pad... For those of you who know Kansas City, the whole city runs on grids, so it's all numbers east and west and then names like Metcalf, Antioch, Row, Nall. I was on State Line, which is the proper word because it is literally the state line for Missouri and Kansas. I lived on State Line and 79th on the Kansas side, which is known as Johnson County. The Missouri side is known as Jackson County. Well, a bunch of brothers from the hood would come play basketball on this court at State Line and 79th because they would get in trouble if they were trying to play hoops over in Jackson County. The police officers would always break up their games because there might have been some illegal activity going on. Nevertheless, they came over to Johnson County and they were left alone.

I'm watching these guys play and I'm like, *I played in college, I can go hang with these guys*, so I wanted to go play with those guys. I walked out, trying to get a break from grading English papers. They wouldn't let me play pick-up. A couple of weeks go by and I go out like, "I got next." It was like they didn't even hear me. It was falling on deaf ears. The only white guy out there, "I got next..." Nothing, crickets. Then finally one day only nine guys showed up, so they had to let me play. I started building a relationship with this guy. He wouldn't even tell me his name.

He said, "What's up, man. My name is State Line Hibachi. I go, "State Line Hibachi?" He goes, "Yeah, you see that street right there? That's called State Line. This is State Line Court. You know Hibachi grills? They never grow cold, just like me. I'm always hot." This dude's got a huge gold grille – gold teeth all across the front. He's got tats all up on his neck, 6'5", 300 pounds. He looks like he should be a linebacker for the Kansas City Chiefs. I started building a relationship with State Line Hibachi.

I'm like, "State Line, why wouldn't you guys let me play?" He goes, "Dude, we thought you were an undercover cop." So, I started building a relationship with him. As a matter of fact, I have him in my home and started having dinner with him. I start hearing his story. I told you he's huge. We started building a relationship and I find out that he's awaiting arraignment. He's facing about five years for a federal case that he got on some drug charges. But I start loving on him. I grew this wild idea that I was going to hire him as my assistant coach because I needed an assistant coach. Imagine bringing that thought to your superintendent at a private Christian school.

So, I got this idea and, believe it or not, I was able to get it done. He coaches with me at this private Christian school and we start building a relationship. I'm just trusting God's faithfulness ever step of the way. God has been so faithful to save people that don't look like us, talk like us, act like us, behave like us. Through this process of coaching with me, he knows at the end of the season... The judge allowed him to coach with me the rest of the season because he thought I was a good influence. He knew when the season ended, it meant his prison sentence started. He coaches with me and we build a relationship and he comes to know the Lord and starts walking with Jesus.

But he has to go to prison, so while he's in prison, I started loving on his kiddos. He had two kids: Darius, which is his son. I took Darius to his first Chief's game and just start trying to be a dad while his dad is in prison for five years. I just start loving on him and he's still writing letters. I even take Darius to visit his dad in prison. He lost a lot of weight and got in shape while he was in prison. We would visit every semester. He first started at Forest City Penitentiary – it was a federal case in Arkansas – and then he got moved to Leavenworth Penitentiary in Kansas and it was a lot easier to visit him. Nevertheless, I never missed trips to Forest City.

He also had a baby girl that was just born as he was going to prison for five years. Her name was Mia Lee. My middle name is Lee and he named Mia Lee after me. I had to tell him, "Derrick, you know my grandfather named me after Robert E. Lee?" I'll never forget what Derrick said. He said, "Man, that don't matter. You've redeemed that name. You're one of the least racist people I've ever met." So, I take care of her and I take care of him and this was after I just took them to get some ring pops and some ice cream.

About a week and a half later, the mother's boyfriend backhands Mia Lee right in the forehead. When he backhanded her right in the forehead, the back of her crown goes into the corner of a stove and kills her. They let Derrick out on furlough for 48 hours. I picked him up and we went to the funeral. It's at this old church in the middle of the hood of Kansas City, Olivette Baptist Church in Downtown Kansas City. Now he's built so many friends through Kansas City at the private school he's been at that half of the people were these white, suburban people with all the people he grew up with in the hood.

The pastor starts to speak and then Derrick get up, just bold as he's always been, and cuts the pastor off and gets up in front of everybody. In this little church, he says, "I want you guys to know that I forgive the man who did this to my daughter and it's only by me experiencing God's faithfulness and forgiveness that I'm able to stand up her and do that. There wasn't a dry eye in that church.

I pick him up, he goes to my house, we hang out for a little bit and then he's got to get back to finish his prison sentence. God's faithfulness is so good. His son is continually been coming to camp with me every summer and hanging out. He has gotten out of prison and has continually been a faithful dad and a faithful, honest worker. He and I are still in touch to this day. We have a strong relationship.

It's a really neat story, but it's not an Adam story and it's not even a Derrick story; it's a God story. It's a story of God's faithfulness. Time and time again, God has been faithful in our lives. Time and time again he has he been faithful in your life. Time and time again as he gotten us through to where we are today.

So, you know what, Woodland Hills? I have no idea who is going to be president in November. I know God is faithful. I have no idea how the Branson economy is going to rebound. I know God is faithful. I have no idea how your wayward child is going to respond in the next six months. I know God is faithful. I have no idea what's going to happen with that sickness you've been diagnosed with. I know God is faithful. I have no idea what's going to happen with your rocky marriage. I know God is faithful and he's never, ever, not been faithful. It is me that has been forgetful. And when I remember his faithfulness, my heart and my soul are in a really good place.

Father God, thank you so much for your faithfulness, your constant, constant faithfulness, great is it. God, forgive us of our forgetfulness. Forgive me of my forgetfulness. God, in the midst of a pandemic and political tension, and everything else going on, Lord, would you help us to fixate our eyes on your goodness. Would you help us to fixate our eyes on your faithfulness, on your constancy?

We love you, Lord. We're so thankful for all that you do. Be with these people. May they be reminded today of your faithfulness in their lives. It's in the matchless and mighty name of Jesus we pray. And all God's people said... Amen.