

Beloved people of God,

One of the things that has surprised me over recent years is the resurgence of interest in Anzac Day celebrations. Back in the seventies and early eighties, there was concern that Anzac Day marches would peter out to nothing. People seemingly were losing interest. There were constant marches against remembering past wars. But that is no longer the case. Over the last ten to fifteen years, the crowds have increased. Not only that, they now organised tours to Gallipoli and other such places regularly. Somehow, the organisers have been able to turn opinion from not remembering to now everyone remembering. And so the saying, "Lest we forget" is back on everyone's lips.

Now in some way I wish we could do the same as far as getting people to remember our almighty God and the great acts he has done. But sadly, perhaps today more than ever before, there is a movement against God and remembering what he has done. So today as we witness the baptism of little Jude Knol, I want to encourage you to think carefully about our God and tell our children about him, lest they forget who is is or what he has done.

It is important for history shows and Scripture shows that God's people are pretty good at forgetting him. The book of Judges highlights this aspect. In the previous book of Joshua, and in the last chapter, Joshua reminds the people of God's covenant love in that he had chosen Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Esau. That he had sent Moses and Aaron and the plagues to Egypt and had brought his people out. Pharaoh's army were drowned in the Red Sea; The Amorites were defeated. King Balak fought against them but Balaam blessed them. And then that chapter ends with Joshua challenging God's people, "Choose this day who you will serve." And the people with one voice said they would serve the Lord and obey him. In Judges 1 we read that God had commanded the various tribes of Israel to drive out the remaining Canaanites. The tribes of Judah and Joseph were successful for God was with them (Ch 1:19). But we also read that several tribes that didn't do what God asked. The tribe of Manasseh didn't (v27), Ephraim didn't (v29), Zebulun didn't (v30) Asher didn't (v31), Naphtali didn't (v33) and hence they were disobedient to God's commands.

As a direct result of their disobedience, many of God's redeemed people inter-married with people who worshiped idols and made alliances with other nations to protect them rather than worshipping their covenant faithful God who had saved them from slavery and their enemies. Instead of God's people living in freedom and enjoying God's blessing, they themselves become slaves to the very ones they were meant to have driven out. And when the slavery became too great to bear, the nation would groan and cry out to God. And God in his mercy and compassion and covenant faithfulness would hear their cries and he would raise up a Judge, a leader if you will, to deliver them from their enemies and back to obeying God's law. However, as soon as the Judge died there would again be a time of disobedience and the downward spiral would start all over again. And each time it got progressively worse. And the answer to why this happened is found in our text.

Joshua their great leader, died at the age of 110 (v8). Verse 10 tells us that after that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord, nor what he had done for Israel! Can you imagine that? In a matter of perhaps 20-30 years the people forgot God's covenant love and what he had done! They had forgotten that God had saved them from the slavery of the Egyptians with his mighty arm and great miracles. They had forgotten that God caused the mighty river Nile to turn to blood! They had forgotten the plague of frogs and gnats, pestering their captors. They had forgotten that much of the Egyptian's livestock died and theirs survived! They had forgotten about the painful plague of boils and the hail that destroyed all the crops, along with the locust plague and darkness and then the last but not least, the firstborn dying in every Egyptian home!

Could you imagine what it would have been like to cross the Jordan when it was in flood on dry ground? Could you imagine marching around a city for six days and then on the seventh day marching around it seven times and all the walls falling down and the enemy defeated? Wow, you would never forget! You would tell your children and your grandchildren until the day you died. How could you not tell them, lest they forget! How could they have forgotten the Lord so quickly? When did the parents stop telling the children about the Lord and his mighty acts? Was it when they were comfortable in their mansions and in their jobs? Was it when they felt they didn't need the Lord anymore? Imagine, within about 30 years they had forgotten the Lord or what he had done! And as a result, they sin and do evil in the sight of the Lord. They worship idols, and the Syrians gods of war and storms. They served foreign gods and bowed down to wooden poles with various carvings. Instead of loving God above all else and being obedient out of thankfulness, the Lord in his love disciplines them by handing them over to their enemies whom they failed to drive out of the land as God had commanded. Now please understand, it's not that they did not know God, but the people thought they could live without him. Well, there is nothing new under the sun. People are glad to acknowledge God or at least some intelligent being that created all things, but for many, that is where it stops. They do not acknowledge that he is their

### "Lest we forget"

Creator who gives them life and sustains them every day. They do not acknowledge their sin and need of a Saviour. In fact, some think it offensive if you suggest to them that they need a Saviour. So instead of God being their first port of call, people cry out to God when the doctor says he can't do anymore or the bank doesn't wish to extend the loan or something else happens that is tragic in their lives or sight.

Thankfully, our God is not just a God of discipline, he is also the God of great compassion and mercy for each time he hears the cries of his people and raises up a Judge, delivers them from their enemies. Now some people say that this cycle of obedience and disobedience was an indication that the nation needed a centralised king. That's not true. They had the perfect King. God was their KING! The problem was, as it is with many today, the people thought that they didn't need God anymore!

So what can we learn from this summary of the book of Judges. I think there are several things. First, disobedience to God is a natural tendency of fallen man. How quick people forget the very God who has given them life and saved them from their enemies. God's OT people forgot him and so do people today! Second, the Judges in the OT, although used by God to draw his people back to covenant obedience, was not a lasting solution. They couldn't stop the cycle of disobedience of God's saved people. Hence, the book of Judges teaches us to look for another Judge. It teaches us that there needs to be a deliverer, a Saviour who could deliver once and for all. And that deliverer is none other than Jesus Christ, God's own Son. The NT book of Hebrews Ch 7:22ff, reminds us, he was not only the perfect sacrifice that was needed to pay our debt for sin, He is the one with whom God the Father was perfectly satisfied, for it was the sinless, perfect sacrifice.

Third, we learn something of God's great mercy and compassion. He heard the cries of his people time and time again and he brings deliverance. He remains faithful to his promises even when the nation of Israel did not! And the same is true for us today. God stands ready to forgive all those who come to Him. Fourth, just as Israel was God's covenant people then, we who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for our forgiveness and salvation, are God's covenant people today. And that's why we also baptize little Jude this morning. And let me add, since we have greater knowledge of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, we have greater responsibility. The greatest of all acts of deliverance and mercy and compassion is when God the Father allowed His Son to die on the cross for our sin so that we believing have forgiveness and eternal life.

Geoffrey and Danielle, tell little Jude about the Lord and what he has done, especially about Jesus Christ and the wonderful forgiveness and eternal life we have in Him. Remember, just one generation grew up and God's OT people forgot God! If we as Christian parents, saved by grace unto eternal life, don't tell them, who will? The world will not tell them. The public school system will probably not tell them. We need to tell them.

So when they get up in the morning, when they walk along the way, when they go to bed at night, tell them about the Lord and what he has done, lest they forget. Tell them that God created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. Show them the billions of stars at night and tell them – our God created them. Take them to the zoo and tell them, God created every animal you see. The mighty lion, the tallest giraffe, the trumpeting elephant, the graceful eagle flying above to the smallest of creatures that run along the ground. Take them to the aquarium and show them the vast variety of fish. From the massive whale to the smallest fish, God made them all by his powerful word. Tell them that God causes the sun to rise in the morning and to set in the evening. Tell them that God stops the hot, strong northerly winds and brings cooling, refreshing rain to stop the raging bush fires.

Last but not least, tell them that when we raised our fist at God, he showed mercy and grace and loved us. When we didn't want to know him, he came to us in the person of His Son. When we deserved to experience punishment for our sin, Jesus came and bore our punishment. When we should have been hanging on the cross, He came and hung on the cross for us. And because of that our sins are forgiven and we have a peace with God that passes understanding. Tell them how good it is to know that should you breathe your last today, God will welcome you into heaven because of Jesus. Tell them the beauty of being part of a Christian community that cares for each other, a place where love rules and people forgive and build each other up in the faith. Tell them, that just as the children in the OT were part of the God's people, so are they. More than that, we have God's Holy Spirit living in us reminding us that we are God's children in Christ. All the promises God made to his OT people are true for us in Jesus Christ, and that's why we baptize little children of believing parents.

So, Geoffrey and Danielle, indeed, let us all be diligent in that. And let's pray that the Lord would bless our weak efforts and bring our children to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Tell them, lest they forget! Amen.