

MARK & FRIENDS PROGRAM RESOURCES

Remembering God's Faithfulness

Looking Back Gives Us Courage to Trust God Forward

Pastor Adam Blackman

Monday, July 27, 2026

Program Summary

In this Monday edition of Mark & Friends, Pastor Adam Blackman begins a special summer journey through the Psalms with Psalm 126. Israel remembered the Lord's great acts of deliverance and restoration, and that history shaped the way they faced unfinished work in the present. In the same way, believers can look back at God's faithfulness in Scripture, at the cross and resurrection of Jesus, and at His work in their own lives. Those memories give us courage to ask Him to restore what remains dry, broken, or incomplete. God's grace is not exhausted, and the One who began a good work will carry it to completion.

Key Takeaways

- Remembering God's past faithfulness changes the way we walk into the future.
- Psalm 126 celebrates restoration already received while still asking God to restore again.
- Salvation restores our relationship with God, but His transforming work continues throughout life.
- The streams of the Negev picture God's power to bring life into dry and barren places.
- Faith may sow through tears before it returns carrying a harvest of joy.
- The cross and resurrection are the greatest evidence that God can be trusted.
- God's grace is greater than sin, shame, failure, and the unfinished places in our lives.
- The Father in Luke 15 restores repentant sinners to relationship and identity, not merely to servitude.

Scripture References

- Psalm 126:1-6
- Philippians 1:6
- Luke 15:11-32
- Romans 5:8
- Genesis 1-3
- Ezekiel 36:26-27
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Quote of the Day

“What causes us to step out in faith is when we can look back and see the faithfulness that has already been.”

Broadcast Notes

Pastor Adam uses a lighthearted story about hiking with his daughter to show how history shapes expectations. Because she knew her father's spontaneous style, she came prepared with water and sandwiches. From there, he traces the biblical story from creation and the fall through Abraham, Israel, exile, and return. Psalm 126 becomes both a celebration and a prayer: the Lord has restored, yet His people still cry, “Restore us again.” The message points ultimately to Jesus, whose death and resurrection secure present restoration and eternal hope.

Practical Applications

- Pause this week and list specific ways God has shown His faithfulness in Scripture and in your own life.
- Thank God for what He has already restored before bringing Him the areas that remain unfinished.
- Name one dry or broken place and pray honestly, “Lord, restore me again.”
- Take one faithful step even when you cannot yet see the harvest.
- Refuse the lie that your sin or shame is greater than God's grace.
- Rest in the promise that God is still completing the work He began in you.

Today's Challenge

Set aside ten quiet minutes. Write down at least five ways God has been faithful to you. Then identify one area that still needs His restoring work and pray Psalm 126:4 in your own words. Carry one practical step of faith into the week, trusting the God whose record is already faithful.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for the great things You have done. Help us remember Your faithfulness when the future feels uncertain and when parts of our lives still seem dry or broken. Restore us again like streams flowing through the desert. Give us faith to sow even through tears, confidence in the finished work of Jesus, and hope that You will complete what You have begun. Free us from shame, draw us close to Your heart, and make us more like Christ each day. In Jesus' name, amen.

About Today's Speaker

Pastor Adam Blackman

Pastor at CU Church

Pastor Adam Blackman serves on the pastoral team at CU Church and invests much of his ministry in students and young people. In this opening message from CU Church's summer journey through the Psalms, he combines biblical history, memorable storytelling, and clear gospel application to help listeners see how God's proven faithfulness gives strength for present-day trust and continued restoration.

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Mark & Friends Welcome Song

We're glad you're here, we're glad you're here,
Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're near.
It's so good to see you, we hope that it's clear,
Everyone loves you, we're glad you're here.

Reading from Psalm 126, verse 3. The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Psalm 126, verse 3. O magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together.

It's Monday, July 27th, 2026. Welcome to another edition of Mark & Friends. Throughout the summer, we're taking a short pause from our verse-by-verse study through the Gospel of Mark.

Pastor Jason Epperson will return to that series in about a month, but over the next several weeks, pastors from CU Church will guide us through selected psalms and the timeless encouragement they offer for everyday life. Today, Pastor Adam Blackman opens Psalm 126, reminding us that when we remember God's faithfulness in the past, we can trust him to continue his restoring work in our lives. Here's Pastor Adam Blackman of CU Church.

Welcome to CU Church. My name is Adam, and I'm one of the pastors on staff. I get to spend a lot of my time hanging out with students.

If you've been with us over the last several weeks, we've been going through one of the stories about Jesus and the Gospel of Mark, and we are taking an intermission for the summer. And so we are going to be plot twist. I'm going to jump into Psalm 126, but there's an idea I want to set up.

And the idea is that the history of who somebody is has a big impact on how you interact with who they are. Here's a lighthearted example. I've been married to my wife Cassie for 12 years, and we have two kids.

My oldest daughter, she's nine years old. And ever since she could walk, we would go on adventures together. I'm the kind of person that I don't like to plan a lot of things.

Let's hop in the car. Let's go on a hike. We live around trails.

And so literally, as soon as she could walk, I'd say, hey, let's go. Let's go on an adventure. Let's climb a tree.

Let's cross a creek. Let's do these kinds of things. And I kind of get worn out by the over planning of things.

Like if I'm going on a vacation for a week, it will take me precisely eight minutes to pack. Just throw everything in there, and we'll figure it out as we go. That's my personality.

That's how I roll. My daughter is not wired like that. So she has been on lots of hikes with me, lots of adventures.

And we'll get out there, and you'll think, you know what? It's a little bit colder than I thought. Could have used a coat, or we didn't bring any water. Last summer, we were walking in Homer Lake.

It's out by St. Joe, in between St. Joe and Homer. We are probably two miles away from a vehicle or a house. And it's a day like it was last week.

It's hot. And I'm walking, and I go, you know, a water would be really nice right now. My eight-year-old daughter pulls off a backpack, opens it up, pulls out a water, cracks it open, takes a drink, shuts it, and she's a lot kinder than me, because that would have made me learn the lesson the hard way.

She pulls out another water, hands it to me, gives me a drink. I thought, man, that's pretty thoughtful. We walk a little bit farther, and I go, man, I'm getting hungry.

It's a true story. She literally made peanut butter and honey sandwiches by herself without being asked, had them in there, pulled them out of the backpack, gives me a sandwich, gives herself a sandwich. We sit down on a log, we have a snack.

And here's the idea, right? She has been with me long enough to know dad ain't bringing nothing, right? She's got history with me. She knows we're going to be here for a good time, but we're not going to have what we need. And so she took matters into her own hands.

See, the history of who I am with my daughter, I've helped raise her to be a responsible young lady. It's a lighthearted example, right? But we all could probably look at people in our life, situations in our life, events in our life that shape who we are, right? Our interactions with people throughout history, they impact how we go about that relationship. And when we look at Psalm 126, here's the big idea I want us to set up, that they look back at the history and the faithfulness of who God is.

And because of looking back at God, it impacts how they walk forward. So a little context, I'm going to start way back in the very beginning and fast forward our way up to where we're at in Psalm 126. If you open up the Bible in the very beginning, what happens is it says, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

So before there was anything, God has always existed and He spoke the world into motion. He created the mountains, He created the seas, He created the animals, He created the beauty, He created all the intricacies of all of creation, and He spoke that into existence. And then in the middle of creation, He placed humanity.

And humanity, He says, we were made in the image of God. We were designed for relationship with Him. We were designed with relationship with others.

And we were designed with a relationship with the things that we do, with our work. And God looked at it and it was good. He provided everything that we needed in Him and in relationships and in our work.

We had it all and then we do what we do. We think, you know what God, you've created us, you've given us everything that we need, but I'll take it from here. And humanity from the very beginning took matters into their own hands, turned their face away from God, and that's when sin entered the world.

Sin, by definition, is it's a failure to love God in the way that we're intended to love God or love people. When sin enters the world, this relationship was fractured. Remember who created the world? God.

I know somebody was raised like this. You're gonna have to help me out. This is the moment I need you to speak back, right? In this moment, God could have done this.

I brought you into the world, somebody's had this said to them, right? Come on, talk to me. I brought you into the world, I can... All right, I'm not alone. God could have done that.

God created all this, but because of the character and the heart of who God is, even in our sin, he looks at us in our condition, and because of his love, he goes, no, no, no, I'm not gonna leave you here. I'm going to restore this back to the way it's intended. And the Bible can be very confusing, and there's a lot of history, and there's a lot of context, and we can get lost in it, and that's all real.

This whole thing's about him redeeming his people back to him, and restoring it back. And so in this storyline, after sin enters the world, he goes on this mission, and he starts, there's a man named Abraham, and Abraham has faith in God,

and because of this, God gives him this promise. He says, through you, Abraham, I'm going to build a family, and that family's going to turn into a nation, and this nation I'm gonna place in this specific place, and so Abraham, sure enough, grows into a nation, this nation of Israel, that's this small, otherwise powerless nation, because of God thrives.

They drive out armies that are far stronger and far bigger, and they end up in this promised land in this specific place. God raises up kings, he raises up prophets, he speaks to them, he blesses them, they're thriving, and he gives them this promise. He says, hey, if you obey me, then you're going to reap what you sow, and so what happens sometimes when we get to the pinnacle of our life and things are going well? Our eyes slip off of who God is, and we think we got this ourself.

Same thing was true of Israel, same thing is true of us. So they take their eyes off God, and God warns them time after time. He sends prophet, he goes, guys, you're not here because of your own work, you're here because of who I am, and he warns them, and he warns them, and he gives them the governance of their heart.

There's this historical event that happened called the exile. And what the exile is is the Babylonian nation came into Jerusalem and came into the capital and absolutely devastated the country of Israel. The temple was destroyed, the walls that protected them were destroyed, and they were taken, and all their stuff, and all the people were spread out all over these foreign nations.

So if you've been to vacation Bible school, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, or Daniel in the lion's den, this all happened during exile. All that history takes place and then we get to Psalm 126. So think for a moment, generation after generation after generation of person has lived under a foreign government that had no respect for who you are, no respect for who your God is, and so then historically what happened is Babylon was conquered by the Persian Empire and King Cyrus, God softened his heart towards God's people, and then he allowed his people to return from exile back to their home in Israel.

That's where we pick up in Psalm 126. Verse 1 starts like this, when the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Zion was the hill

that historically King David captured, and it became this idea like Wall Street stands for all of the business district in New York, or Hollywood, all of the movies.

Zion kind of represents the place where God dwells and the place where God's people are, and so after they come back from exile it says we were restored back to Zion, and we were like people who dreamed. It's a true event that happened, but it's such a beautiful good thing they can't even get over it. Verse 2 says, our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy.

When it was said among the nation, the Lord has done great things to them, and they replied, the Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. I want us to notice in the first three verses in this psalm, it's all about the celebration of what God's done. Remember where we started? That when we look at the history of who God is, or we look at the history of who somebody is, it changes how we interact in our present.

Well they're looking back and they're thinking, man look at what God's done. Look at the journey that he's brought us on. Think back to when he just chose Abraham as a man and built him into a nation.

Think back to when he turned his hand against Egypt and brought down plagues to show his power. Think back to when the Red Sea was split open and God's people walked through. Think back through when we were in the wilderness and we were journeying, and we were dependent on God, and he brought water from a rock, and he brought bread from heaven, and he provided quail in the wilderness, and he provided for us by his very hand.

Think back before all the nations that we were powerless against that God turned away by his power. Think back to a young shepherd boy that God raised up and slayed a giant. Think back to the prophets who spoke to us about our sin.

Think back to the generations when we were in exile and we were without hope. And think back to how God's restored us and now brought us back, and he's doing this thing among our nation. And they can't help but to celebrate because of the history of the faithfulness of who God is.

And I love in verse 2 what it says. It says, the nations look, and when they looked at Israel, even if they didn't believe, they had no choice but to admire who God

was and what he'd been doing among his people. Verse 4, it says, Restore our fortunes, Lord, like the streams and the Negev.

Did you notice the word that was started in verse 4, it says, Restore? If you look back in verse 1, it said, When the Lord restored. So how is it that the Lord has already restored them, and then in verse 4, they're crying out to God to restore them again. Here's a beautiful truth about who God is, is that even after they've been restored to their land, right, they're walking back to a place with a destroyed temple.

They're walking back to a place where the walls of their nation were destroyed. They're walking back into a place where they had lost the words and the law of God. And it's really the same thing for us.

Can you look back in your life and remember the moment where God called you by name? Can you look back and you remember the moment where you realize that God redeemed your identity? Think back to the moment where because of what Jesus has done, you realize that my relationship with God can be restored, that my relationship with other people can be changed, my relationship with what I do is forever changed, right? And in a moment when we put our faith in Christ, we are restored, we are justified. But there's a truth that follows that too. We still have things in our life, right, even after that moment that need restored.

I still have brokenness, I still have sin in my life that God hasn't changed in me yet. And just like that, Israel is crying out and they're saying, God, you've already done this thing, right? You've already brought us back, you've already brought us from exile, you've already shown your history, but we need you to restore us again. It says like streams in the Negev.

The Negev was in the southern desert and most of the year it would have been dry and barren. And then almost overnight, a spring rain could come and this place that was dry and barren could have streams of water flowing through it in one moment. And this picture is a powerful image of what they're asking God to do within them.

That this thing, that's not how it's supposed to be intended. We want the temple back, we want the walls back, we want your presence back, we want your word back. All that's not there yet, but you've done this thing, God.

We want you to do this, like the streams in the Negev. Bring back life to this place. Have you ever cried out to God like this psalm allows us to do? Where we look back and we think, God, look at all of what you've done in my life.

Here's a challenge I'd give all of us to do this week, is just pause and just pray. Say, Lord, help me to remember all the things that you've done for me, right? We'll go through some of the things that we can look back in Scripture, but even just within our own life, God, help me to see the things that you've done in my life. And then from that place, we get to look at the things that are still undone, the things that still need work, the rough edges that I'm still working through, the sin that I still got, the mistakes that I've made time after time after time, day after day after day, year after year after year.

And from that place of God's faithfulness, I can look at that and say, God, restore me again. Like streams in the Negev, I need you to keep doing your work within me. Verse 5, those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.

Those who go out weeping, caring to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them. There's this beautiful picture that, there's this agricultural illustration that in farming during this time, what they would do is when you harvested your crop, you would set aside seed from some of that crop to plant for your next year. And so if you can imagine this desert picture that they have, and you harvest this crop, it takes an awful lot of faith to say, you know what, I'm gonna take some of the resource that I could use to survive for myself, and I'm gonna put this in the ground.

And once you put that in the ground, right, it's all based on faith, whether that thing will grow or not. And there's this image that God's giving us that, hey Lord, we need you to restore us. We need you to do a work within us.

And even though this thing is still broken within me, even though I still have these issues, even though I still have all these broken edges, right, if I'm going to sow this in faith, I'm going to ask you again, and even though the situation or the circumstance might be changed, I'm going to act in faith now with the hope of what's to come later. What causes us to step out in faith? What causes us to step out in faith is when we can look back and you can see the faithfulness that's already been. Do you know God's resume? Has he given you a reason to trust him? Because this Psalm tells a story of Israel's restoration, but it's also a

historical foreshadow that points towards the greater restoration that we have in God that's won through Christ.

Because of Jesus, when we look back, we can see a God who took on flesh, that was born as a baby just like us, that endured sickness, that endured getting made fun of. We have a God who can take loaves and feed thousands. We have a God that can take a paralytic and make him walk.

We have a God who can heal the blind, make the mute talk, and make the deaf hear. We have a God who bore our sicknesses and our pain. We have a God who taught with authority and showed us what it looks like to walk in the Spirit.

We have a God who went to the full length of humility when he walked up a hill and was nailed to a cross. We have a God who lived in perfect submission to his Father, who never sinned, who willingly laid down his life for us. We have a God that looked at me and he looked at you, and what Romans says is that while we were still sinners, while we were still actively in rebellion, Christ died for us.

We have a God who was put in a tomb, and we have a God who was risen. We have a God that then went and told us to make disciples. We have a God that's now seated at the right hand of the Father.

We have a God who has given us his word that he's coming back, and he's told us who we are and where we can find life. We have a God who promises that his Spirit can dwell within us, and that the temple is now within our own body, that when we accept Christ through faith, we get the promise of the seal of the Holy Spirit. And then this heart of stone that by my own efforts and by my own actions could never achieve the blessing of God, that I get to receive it through faith, and that he gives me a heart of flesh, and his Spirit now guides my life and has my life.

We have a God that promises not only will I have a new life now, but I have a new life for eternity, because just as Christ rose, I get to rise with him because of his love. Do you know the history of who God is? But in my life, I don't even have to look that far back. I could just look at the history of this church.

Just time after time after time, God has shown who he is. I can look out into this room, and I can see hearts that have been restored, people who have been

forgiven, marriages that have been reconciled. See, God can do what no one else can do.

He can restore us. And maybe for some of us in this room, it's a moment for us to look back and to remember that moment where we were justified, and we remember, and we shout, man, praise God, I'm full of joy. But for some of us in this room, maybe we're feeling the heaviness of the brokenness we're still walking in, and we need to cry out just like the psalmist.

Just like you restored me before God, I need that same power in my life now. See, once we're justified by faith, that doesn't mean we take it from here and try it by our own actions. In the same way, the areas of our life that we need restored, we need to look to Jesus and say, help me do this, Lord.

I can't do it by myself. And in that moment, what we sow in faith, God will multiply. And sometimes in ways that we don't see, but we have the promise of heaven, and sometimes on this side of heaven, the story doesn't end in a bow.

Sometimes the story ends in sickness. Sometimes the story ends in a coffin. Sometimes the story still ends in a broken relationship.

But because of the goodness of God, and because of the faithfulness of Jesus, we have an eternal hope that is secure. Philippians chapter 1 verse 6 says it like this, that being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. I want to finish with this story.

God put this story on my heart. It's found in Luke chapter 15, and maybe this is just the way that he's wrecking my heart, but what causes us to stop looking to Jesus? What stops us from crying out to him for restoration? And I think in Luke chapter 15, there's two different characters that we're gonna see. One, there's a father that represents God.

And the story starts out with a younger son that comes to the father, and he asked for his inheritance, and the father's not dead. And so basically he's saying, I just want the things that you have, right? God, I just want all that you can offer me, but I don't want you. And the father gives him all of this inheritance, and the son takes it, and he leaves the father, and he goes to party town.

He's having a good time. He's chasing every desire of his flesh. He's chasing every lust.

He's going crazy. He's having the time of his life, and a famine hits the land. He spends all the resources that he has.

He's out of money. He's hungry, and so he starts to work. He's working in a pig pen.

He doesn't have any food. He wants to eat what the pigs are eating, rock-bottom low. And in this moment, he thinks, man, I wish I could just be a slave for my father again, because at least there's a place to sleep, and there's food to eat.

And so he comes to his senses. He dusts himself off, and he starts walking back. He's walking back.

He's thinking about how he can prepare this speech for his father. And as his head is down, and he's walking towards his father, rehearsing his lines, the father sees him, and he's moved by his love. And the father runs to him, wraps his arms around him, puts a coat around him, puts a ring on his finger, and he says, son, you're home.

I love you, right? What stops us sometimes from calling to the Lord for restoration is we don't have a picture of a father who wants to wrap his arms around you and say, I love you, and I forgive you. And he doesn't just forgive him and make him a slave, man. He grabs the fattest calf on the property.

He slaughters that thing, and it's ribeyes on the grill. It's a good day. It's a party.

And the son is restored back to his identity. What's stopping you from restoration? God's bigger than your sin. God's bigger than your worst moment.

God's bigger than your shame. And he wants to wrap his arms around you. He loves you.

Then there's another son in the story. He never left. He was working with the father, but he didn't love the father.

He was doing the things the father asked him to do, but his heart wasn't towards the father. And he watches the younger son come back, and he's standing there, and he's just thinking, I can't believe it. Why would you give him— you already

gave him all this stuff, and now you're gonna give him more? What about me? And I think one of the reasons the older son misses the restoration that the father had for him is because he thinks the father's gonna run out of grace.

That because he's gonna be able to bring the younger son back, that somehow he's gonna be left out. And sometimes what stops the restoration that God has for us is because we think God's grace is limited. That it's limited by the good things that we do, or that it's limited that if he sees somebody else that he can't see me.

See, God is so much bigger than we think, and he wants that older son to know it's not just about the doing the right things and walking in the right lines, that he wants that son to know his heart. What stops us from restoration? Are you worn out from trying? Are you worn out from trying to look good? Are you worn out by trying to walk in obedience without knowing God's heart? When we look to the cross, and we look to the resurrection, and we receive that by faith, we are restored in a moment. We are justified before God.

But every single day of our life, just like in this psalm, we have a choice to keep saying, God keep restoring me. Make me more like Jesus. Thank you for joining us for today's edition of Mark & Friends.

Today Pastor Adam Blackman reminded us that God's faithfulness in the past gives us confidence to trust him with the future. Just as God restored his people, he continues his restoring work in our hearts and lives through Jesus today. This is the first message in our special summer journey through the Psalms, and we hope you'll join us over the coming weeks as pastors from CU Church help us discover the hope, encouragement, and wisdom found throughout this remarkable book.

We'll return to the study of the book of Mark in about a month or so. We also invite you to continue learning by visiting the Mark & Friends page at greatnewsradio.org or wluj.org. There you'll find today's broadcast and additional resources to help you continue your walk with Jesus. Thanks for listening.

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