

because **God**

sermon series

Introduction

Originally, my idea was to name this series "Truths for 2024." The idea came from the thought of entering the year of 2024 with a solid foundation of who God is and who we are in Him. My initial plan was to sort of separate the series into two parts: one dealing with the character of God and the other dealing with who we are in Him.

But then, as I started to brainstorm names and Bible passages, I saw that the sermons on the character of God could be closely connected to the sermons on who we are in Him. I decided then (I hope, inspired by the Holy Spirit) to try to combine Bible references describing the character of the Almighty with Bible stories that show how humans benefited from it.

I think it may be a little confusing with me describing in this way, so let me give you an example using the first sermon of the series. Here is its name: "Because God hears we can sing."

The name of this sermon is a sentence that can be described as "cause and effect," in which the cause comes first, followed by the effect. Applying to our example - because God is a God who hears His children, we (His children) can sing to Him.

It is also important to note that each sermon is based on two Scriptural texts - one dealing with the Cause of the sentence and one with the effect. Let's use the first sermon again as an example:

The certainty that God hears us is given by He Himself in Psalm 50:15, which reads, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." And a representation of that in a story-telling form in the Bible is found in Acts 16:16-40 when Paul and Silas, even incarcerated, sing to the God who hears.

With that in mind, the following eight sermons provide a brief context and background for the passages being studied. I intentionally made them short, giving a foundation (or an overview, if you will). They are not full sermons but only ideas of how the Texts can be interpreted. At the end of the day, I believe that it is the preacher who has to seek God through prayer and study to deliver to the congregation what the Eternal wants to speak through him.

I hope this introduction made sense and that we can learn from each other as we prepare and study the Holy Scriptures.

Blessings,

Abner.

Because God hears, we can sing.

Bible references: Psalm 50:15 & Acts 16:16-40

Psalm 50:15 is an open invitation to talk to God. In fact, the Almighty Himself is the One who offers such a great opportunity to His children. However, although this verse is very powerful in and of itself, sometimes it becomes hard for us to apply the truth transmitted to us in our daily lives.

A few things catch my eye when looking at the Psalm. The first one is that God shows His “availability” in hearing us on the days things are not going super well - He invites us to call to Him on the day of trouble. The second thing is that He states that after listening to us, He will deliver us, and then we’re going to glorify Him. And this is kind of interesting to me mainly because somehow it is as if God was saying that the outcome of speaking to Him on the day of trouble is to bring glory to His name.

Again, while these nice observations sound great in theory, how do we turn them into something more “applicable” to our daily living?

Well, several stories recount God’s deliverance to a people who cried out to Him. The book of Judges, for example, is filled with them. However, lately, I’ve been thinking a lot about the narrative of Paul and Silas in the prison found in Acts 16. And prior to the “putting-together” of this material, I had never seen this narrative how I propose it to be used here.

In the narrative of Acts 16, I see two men who realized that when nothing seems to be working out, we have Someone willing to listen to our cry. The One who listened to their prayers and hymns was indeed able to deliver them, and more importantly, the outcome of their crying out to God was the name of Jesus being glorified by the salvation of the Jailer and his household.

It is as if all the “steps” of Psalm 50:15 are vividly given to us in Acts 16:16-40.

Here are some studying tools that may help you prepare for the sermon:

- The Book of the Acts (The New International Commentary on the New Testament | NICNT)
- I would try to use Blue Letter Bible or Bible Hub for original language study

Because God is the Creator, we can create.

Bible references: Genesis 1:1 & Exodus 31:1-11

The Bible is very clear right at its beginning to state that God is a Creator. He is *the* Creator! And I believe we do a pretty average (if not poor) job in studying this very interesting divine character.

On that note, Exodus 31:1-11 is a Bible passage that most people don't pay attention to, but I have always found it to be fascinating.

Here are the people of Israel at the bottom of Mount Sinai while Moses is on its top talking with the Creator: Amidst the many instructions and commandments the Eternal is giving Moses, there are some (actually many) particular ones concerning the building of the Tabernacle. And among the instructions concerning the Tabernacle are precise instructions concerning the crafty creations that should be built for it.

For those specific tasks, the Creator appoints two creators to be sort of in charge: Bezaleel and Oholiab (or Aholiab). Because we have never seen the Tabernacle in person or probably don't fully understand what it represented for the people of Israel, we kind of downplay the importance of being involved in such a fantastic project. We can perhaps say that the building of the Tabernacle was the first big, crafty, and detailed project the nation of Israel ever made.

For this significant project, the Creator fills His creators with the ability to do something that has never been seen before! I don't know about you, but this is mind-blowing to me.

I know that this passage can easily be seen as a message to people who use their creativity skills in a church setting. However, I think that this narrative speaks for a broader audience.

The Tabernacle worked as a visible, tangible presence of YHWH [not only for the people of Israel but for any alien that lived among them and also for the surrounding nations] that made His people experience His presence and glory. By looking at the Tabernacle and the Spirit-led work of Bezaleel and Oholiab, people are "drawn closer to the Creator."

Again, I don't know if that's a huge stretch, but I see that maybe this passage is also inviting God's people to use their God-given abilities of creation to create what can bring glory to His name and draw people closer to Him. We will never be able to create as He does, but we do can create.

Here are some studying tools that may help you prepare for the sermon:

- Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 3, Exodus
- Exodus (New American Commentary | NAC)
- I would try to use Blue Letter Bible or Bible Hub for original language study

Because God saves, we are secure.

Bible references: Jonah 2:9b & Daniel 6

In the second chapter of the book of the prophet Jonah, the not-so-faithful prophet utters a very complex and interesting prayer from the belly of the great fish YHWH prepared for him.

In Jonah 2, the prophet (if we believe that it was he who actually prayed) ends his prayer with a powerful and profound affirmation that says, “Salvation [deliverance] is of YHWH.”

Well, if you grew up in the church or have been following the Lord for a while, you might have run across the affirmation that “God saves!” Honestly, this should be a foundational aspect of our faith if we consider that we are now redeemed because God sent His only begotten Son to die for our sins so that we could be freely saved by grace through faith.

And while this is a solid truth stated in the Holy Scriptures, I think that when Jonah is talking about salvation he is not referring to eternal life and eternity with the Almighty. I believe that the salvation Jonah is referring to has to do with his deliverance from this watery monster that swallowed him.

Yes, we know that God saves. We know that if we walk faithfully in His words, we will receive the crown of life. But what does it mean to be secure once we have a God who saves? Well, there is a story found in the book of another prophet that gives us a glimpse of how this security may look.

In Daniel 6, YHWH's faithful servant Daniel is put in a situation as troublesome as the prophet Jonah was. However, while Jonah is swallowed by the fish because of his unfaithfulness, Daniel is thrown into the lion's den because of his extreme zeal for YHWH.

The story of Daniel in the lion's den has so many fascinating teachings that testify to the character of YHWH as a Savior [in this earthly life] and of the outcome of those who put their trust in Him. Here are some of them:

- Daniel's faithfulness is evident to those around him. Matter of fact, the people who plotted against him knew that they could only catch him in his faithfulness (v.5);
- While the king lost sleep due to his lack of power in rescuing Daniel, YHWH proved Himself to be the One who really saves (vv.14,18,22,26,27);
- YHWH saves the ones who trust in Him (v.23).

All of the observations above are very important when studying the narrative and are great examples of the salvific work of YHWH. Nevertheless, I believe that there may be more in the narrative of Daniel concerning the kind of security we have in the Almighty.

Let me try to explain. When we look at the deliverance Daniel receives after being thrown into the lions' den we, correctly, assume that this is the type of security that those who follow the Eternal can expect. This kind of security would be what I would call “situational security.” There is nothing wrong with it and many men and women have experienced and are experiencing it.

However, I think that this narrative presents us with a different kind of security. I would even go to the extent of saying that the book of Daniel as a whole is an invitation to this very kind of security.

Daniel's original audience was either the Hebrew population of the Babylonian Diaspora (in the sixth century BC) or the Palestines suffering intense persecution under the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (in the second century). These two groups of people had one thing in common: their faithfulness to YHWH was at stake! They were not allowed to freely worship their God and were constantly enticed to engage in Gentile cults.

Written to such an audience, the book of Daniel would function as an invitation (even an encouragement) to mirror the actions of its main characters - faithful Jews who in the midst of great distress, found security in their covenantal relationship with the Eternal. Their security wasn't situational, but a matter of a deep conviction that did not rely on the outcomes or consequences imposed upon them.

Although not living in exile or extreme persecution, we as God's people, are also invited to imitate the faith and conviction of Daniel, Mishael, Hannaniah, and Azariah. Our security is in the God who saves.

Here are some studying tools that may help you prepare for the sermon:

- Daniel (Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 30 | WBC)
- Esther & Daniel: (A Theological Bible Commentary from Leading Contemporary Theologians - BTC)
(Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible)
- The Expositor's Bible Commentary- Daniel
- I would try to use Blue Letter Bible or Bible Hub for original language study

Because God is faithful, we can trust.

Bible references: 2 Timothy 2:13 & 1 Kings 17:1-16

I consider 2 Timothy 2:13 my favorite Bible verse. It reads, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful for He cannot deny Himself."

This verse brings overwhelming comfort to my soul in the assurance that my God is faithful to His word (although most of the time I'm not) but also challenges me to grow in my faithfulness as I walk with Him, even in the most challenging times. God is faithful; therefore, I can trust.

Such assurance should be good enough for us to walk outside these walls relaxing and trusting in the word that comes from the Eternal. But it's not that easy. Sometimes, it's helpful to hear, see, and read stories of godly men and women who came before us, who are examples of what trust in the Word of YHWH looks like.

With that in mind, 1 Kings 17:1-16 has a fascinating story about trust in the Word of YHWH.

1 Kings 17 introduces one of the most famous characters in the Old Testament. Your homeboy Elijah. This man of God, whose name means "Yah is my God," performed the craziest acts a prophet ever did. I mean, his first appearance was telling King Ahab that there would be no dew or rain in the land except by his command.

[Here, I find it interesting to draw attention to how Elijah's speech can be translated. Most translations read, "As the LORD God lives..." However, I was reading the World Biblical Commentary, and that's how it reads, "By the life of YHWH..." The same wording is found in the widow's response to Elijah's crazy request in v. 12. I don't know how that would interfere with the interpretation proposed here, but I just thought it interesting to share with you.]

After this very affirmation, the Word of YHWH comes to Elijah, asking Him to go to a wadi where He promised the prophet drink and food. Elijah trusts the Eternal's Word. YHWH is faithful to keep His word. YHWH makes a "garden" in the midst of the wilderness, as He had done for Israel centuries before.

After a while, the wadi dries up. The Word of the Lord comes to Elijah again, instructing Him to go to Zarephath because He had a widow in the town that would provide for him. Elijah trusts the Eternal's Word.

He arrives and finds out the widow didn't have that much spare food. The prophet says that by providing for him, the Eternal would provide for her and her son. The widow trusts the Eternal's word spoken through his prophet. YHWH is faithful to keep His word.

It is fascinating for me to see how the pattern of trusting the word of the LORD is played in 1 Kings 17. And I know that none of us will go through the same situation Elijah and the widow went through, but we can copy their example of trust.

And you may be wondering, "I don't know if I have the ears of Elijah to distinguish God's voice. How do I know what He is saying to me?" Well, you've got your Bible, right? If you do, you have access to the Word of the Lord and all the promises and instructions He has for His people. And amidst these instructions, an excellent Bible verse says, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful for He cannot deny Himself."

Okay, here goes an extra observation that I noticed studying the text. When we read 1 Kings 17:1 we assume that Elijah goes to Ahab and tells him that there will be no rain because YHWH instructed him to do so. That may have happened; however, the text never says that. Interesting right? Well, above I said that though we may never experience listening to God's voice in a clear way, having access to His Word, we can hear Him. And I honestly think that the narrative of 1 Kings 17 also points to that.

If we go to Leviticus, more specifically chapter 26 verse 19 we'll see that one of the outcomes of disobedience would be having the "heaven as iron, and your earth as brass." The same kind of punishment is found in Deuteronomy 28:19; 28:23. From that we can grasp that Elijah knew his Bible pretty well, and it was based on what the Eternal had said a long time ago that he had the boldness to face the king (who was not being faithful to the covenant) and only pronounce the Word of the Lord that had already been revealed in Scripture.

Here are some studying tools that may help you prepare for the sermon:

- 1 & 2 Kings: Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible)
- 1 Kings (Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 12 | WBC)
- I would try to use Blue Letter Bible or Bible Hub for original language study

Because God is a refuge, we can rest.

Bible references: Psalm 46:1 & Exodus 14 (emphasis on verses 13 and 14)

I grew up listening to Psalm 46 at least once a week. I remember that I was quite young when I was able to recite all 11 verses by memory (in Portuguese, of course). This famous Psalm starts with a very bold and firm affirmation declaring that God is a Refuge.

Because of my upbringing in the 21st century, my concept of refuge is a little different than the refuge the sons of Korah referred to when writing Psalm 46. However, I think I can grasp what they were talking about. I believe that by affirming that God is a Refuge, they were saying that no matter what comes, God is the One to whom we can go for protection. He is the One that gives us shelter and assurance of security.

Later on in the same Psalm, the Psalter would say that because God is a refuge, His people should “Be still.” And, as I mentioned before, I grew up familiar with this Psalm, I knew how to recite it by heart. But how does Psalm 46 and the assurance of God being a refuge play out in a “real-life situation?” Well, I think that Exodus 14 has a narrative that may give us some interesting insights.

After being delivered by YHWH from the hands of Egypt, the people of Israel started their journey to the Promised Land. Their freedom doesn’t seem to last long since, after a little while Pharaoh regrets his decision and starts pursuing the Israelites.

It is true that YHWH already had proven Himself to be a Refuge for His people. I mean, He delivered them from slavery and was providing what I consider the best security system available - The LORD Himself went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire.

Nevertheless, when the people see Pharaoh and his army, it seems as if they completely forget about this amazing protection YHWH was providing them with and start to go off on Moses saying, “It would be better off if we kept living as slaves instead of dying on this desert.”

To that Moses replies something like, “Don’t be afraid. Stay where you are and see Yawheh’s salvation, which He will provide for you today. Because you have seen the Egyptians today you will never see them again. Yahweh will fight for you. You do not need to do anything.”

Some translations, instead of reading “Stay where you are,” read “Be still.” Which would possibly have the sense of “Leave off your activity” or “Stop!” This is interesting because this sense of “being still” sort of matches one of the meanings of “resting” - cease work or movement. In other words, it seems as if Moses was saying to the people, “Don’t be afraid, rest in Yahweh.”

Surprisingly enough, it looks like the people heard Moses’ instructions. They cease their noises of complaint, and by resting on the protection provided by the Eternal, experienced deliverance from the watery chaos.

When the day of trouble comes, may we do the same and truly believe that because God is a Refuge, we can rest!

Here are some studying tools that may help you prepare for the sermon:

- Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 3, Exodus
- Exodus (New American Commentary | NAC)
- I would try to use Blue Letter Bible or Bible Hub for original language study

Because God fights for us, we are victorious.

Bible references: 2 Chronicles 20:15b & 2 Samuel 5:17-25

2 Chronicles 20 presents us with a mind-blowing story of faith and deliverance. After being threatened by the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, King Jehoshaphat, realizing the limitation of his military power, cries out to YHWH, begging for help. In fact, the king himself says he has no clue what to do, but his eyes were focused on the Eternal.

The Almighty answers that prayer through the mouth of Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, assuring the people that they would obtain victory not because of their efforts or power, but solely because the battle was His (2 Chronicles 20:15). The chapter concludes with the people of Judah indeed defeating their enemies and the name of the LORD being honored once He was the One who actually won the battle.

If you spend a little while reading and meditating on the Old Testament, you will run across many stories of God delivering His people, like the story of 2 Chronicles. From those stories and the very affirmations of the Eternal, we learn that we have a God who fights our battles. We have Someone who goes before us and wins for us. And once we have a God who is powerful enough to hold the cosmos in His hand, because of His power and love, we are victorious.

However, does that mean we can “blindly” fight once we have the Father? Does it mean I will always be victorious in whatever hardship I face? If it is God who is fighting, do I actually need to do anything? Well, questions like the ones above can be partially, if not well answered using another battle narrative also found in the Old Testament.

A little more than 100 years before the narrative of Jehoshaphat, a new king was trying to establish his kingdom in the lands of Israel. His name was David. In fact, the establishment of his kingdom sort of starts at the beginning of 2 Samuel. From chapters 1 to 4, we read of all the instability David had to face before actually becoming the king of the whole Israel. And in chapter 5, we see David, already crowned king of the entire land, facing the Philistines.

Okay, but what does this story teach us about having the Lord fighting our battles? Well, some very interesting things:

In verse 19, when David learns that the Philistines had come to fight, his first action is going down to the stronghold (or hiding place) and inquiring of the Lord, asking if he should go fight. The Eternal responds by saying that the new king should, once He would “doubtless deliver the Philistines” into his hand. From this, we see again a God fighting for His people, but we also see that although the King is fighting for us, we must do some work. David asks, receives the green light, and goes to the battle. Because God fights for us we are victorious, but ***we still gotta go to the battlefield.***

[An interesting observation on this battle account is given to us in verse 21, where the narrator says that the Philistines abandoned their idols after being defeated. The implication of this verse is that Israel's victory wasn't simply military but also a theological triumph. While in 1 Samuel 5, because of Israel's unfaithfulness, the Ark was taken by the Philistines, in 2 Samuel 5, the opposite happens because of the faithfulness of King David.]

The second fascinating thing we learn from this passage is found in verse 22. To give a little context, after getting their butts kicked, the Philistines decide to fight again (although some scholars will propose that this is just the retelling of the previous victory, I respectfully disagree). When reading that, you'd expect David to fight them immediately once he had just received victory. However, he does not do that. David once again inquires of YHWH what should be done, trusting His command. Because God fights for us we are victorious; however, ***we still ought to wait and trust in His direction.***

Surprisingly, YHWH's instruction varies a little bit from the first time. He says, “You shall not go up. Go around their back and come to them in front of the balsam trees” (v.23). And here comes the part that I like the most, “When you hear the sound of marching on the tops of the balsam trees, then act with decision for then YHWH will have

gone out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines.” (v.24)

And this, I believe, is the third crucial teaching of this narrative - when we take heed of God's instruction, He goes before us on the battlefield! Yes, we have to ask and inquire of Him. Yes, we have to do our part and go to the battlefield. But we are victorious because He is the God who owns the victory!

Here are some studying tools that may help you prepare for the sermon:

- Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 11, 2 Samuel
- The Second Book of Samuel (New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT))
- I would try to use Blue Letter Bible or Bible Hub for original language study

Because God is present, we are comforted.

Bible references: Psalm 34:18 & Luke 24:13-35

Psalm 34 is a song written by David when he pretended madness before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed (which is a wack story in and of itself). In the Psalm, David praises the Lord for the salvation he had just received. Because of his assurance on the character of the Eternal as the One who takes good care of His own, David instructs the readers and listeners to fear the Lord, to taste and see that He is good!

Amidst these declarations of the character of God and how we should respond to it, David makes a statement that always caught my eye. In verse 18, he writes, “The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite (crushed) spirit.” For some reason, it always blew my mind that there is a God who is present, near those who are crushed in Spirit.

David goes on to say that besides being present with those who are brokenhearted, the Almighty also saves them. The Hebrew word used here for “save” appears another 198 times in the Old Testament and denotes the idea of being delivered, helped, and saved. And I don’t know how big of a stretch that is, but when I read Psalm 34, this salvation promised in verse 18 sounds as if it was a salvation that would come through comfort.

My point is - YHWH is near (present with) those with crushed spirit, and because He is near, they are comforted.

Of all the gospels, only Luke contains a very intriguing narrative about two of Jesus’ disciples who were traveling to Emmaus after having their hopes crushed by the crucifixion of their Rabbi. Out of the two disciples, only one is named (Cleopas), which led scholars to point out that the other was more than likely a woman once she was unnamed in the text.

In any case, the exact reason for their travel is uncertain. Maybe they were fleeing from the tremendous oppression the followers of the Way faced in Jerusalem. Perhaps they gave up on trying to unveil the mystery of Jesus’ lost body.

Amid their distress, the risen Messiah approaches them, but the disciples are kept from recognizing Him. Although some hold to the correct interpretation that the disciples’ failure to recognize Jesus is usually attributed to divine intention, I also believe their failure is occasioned by the state of their hearts. To me, these disciples are a great example of what David called “the brokenhearted” back in Psalm 34.

After approaching the disciples, Jesus asks, “What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?” Drawing near to the brokenhearted, Jesus wants to know their struggles. He wants to know what is going on.

Jesus’ question starts a great conversation that culminates with the risen Christ, beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, explaining to the disciples the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. I imagine the disciples’ countenance changing as Jesus comforted them with hope and encouragement through the exposition of the Text. The appreciation of Jesus’ company was so great that the disciples urged Him to stay with them.

As they gathered around the table, Jesus took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. At that moment, they realized Who this random guy was: their risen Messiah!

As they’re wrapping their heads around the fact that Jesus is alive, they say to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?” (v.32). And in their very question I see how the presence of the Savior brought comfort and a new hope to their hearts. The disciples who were crushed in their spirit, being met by the God who is present, were comforted.

The same God who was near the brokenhearted disciples back on the road to Emmaus is the same One who is near the brokenhearted today. Because this God is present, we are comforted!

Here are some studying tools that may help you prepare for the sermon:

- Word Biblical Commentary Luke 18:35-24:53, Volume 35C
- I would try to use Blue Letter Bible or Bible Hub for original language study

Because God is merciful, we are restored.

Bible references: Exodus 34:6-7 & John 21:1-19

When we think about God in the Old Testament, we picture in our heads the image of this old man, dressed in a white robe, who has a face that kinda frightens you. In fact, some people go to the extent of defining Him as a God who delighted in wars and bloodshed.

Yeah, I know this may sound super wrong to you, but let's do a little experiment. Let's read together this hypothetical gospel sharing:

"Yes, we don't deserve God's love. We all have sinned and fallen short of His glory. The only thing we deserve is punishment. However, when Jesus died for us He cleansed us from all of our sins and because of Him, now we are accepted."

Okay, theologically, I find no mistake in the paragraph above, all of the statements are affirmed by the Holy Scriptures. But still, I believe that some of the mistaken interpretations that can come out of those, commonly go unnoticed among Christians.

I wonder if someone who doesn't have a commitment to the Lord, would listen to these words and think that there is a difference between Jesus and God. I wonder if one of the wrong interpretations of these words would lead someone to believe that the Father is actually this grumpy man who sits on His throne, but thankfully has a very nice and cool Son who decided to save everyone. I fear for many believers who, without noticing, ran through this dilemma...

Indeed, the Old Testament is full of wars and God honestly acted in ways that I in my finite cognition cannot understand. However, if there is one thing we cannot ignore when reading the Old Testament, is that God has shown Himself to be merciful over and over again. He has shown Himself to be a God full of Love!

In Exodus 34, the Eternal passes in front of His servant Moses and proclaims,

"The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." (vv.6-7)

If that wasn't a big enough "proof" of a God who is merciful, let's take into account what had happened a little before chapter 34.

In chapter 32, the Israelites go crazy and, fearing that Moses would not come back from his meeting with the Almighty, "force" Aaron to make gods who would lead them in the desert. Yes, while God, in love, is instructing Moses on how the people should walk. While the Eternal is given Moses commandments that would aid the people to walk closer to Him, these very people are betraying Him. The story goes on and we see how God, in His mercy, relented from despising the people He brought back from the land of Egypt.

If this context wasn't enough, let's look a little closer at the verses above. The LORD says that He keeps mercy for a thousand generations and punishes sin to the third and fourth generations.

When we read these words it feels like we literally ignore the thousand generations jumping straight to the third and fourth generations. If we do a simple math we can clearly see that God's mercy and forgiveness are way bigger than His punishment. I'm not saying that He doesn't act in justice, I am just saying that if we put mercy and justice on a scale, I think mercy weighs more. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and His character was displayed in a visible form in the person of His Beloved, Christ.

In John 21:1-19 after conquering death, Jesus, in an act of extreme mercy restored one of his loved disciples: Peter. It is true that Peter had forsaken Him, it is true that Peter had fled, and it is true that Peter [at that time] wasn't able to love Jesus the way the Savior loved him, but still, God was merciful.

The "God of the Old Testament" still forgives today. He still displays mercy today. And we are here breathing because of His overwhelming and inexplicable, unfailing mercy. Praised be His holy name forevermore!

Here are some studying tools that may help you prepare for the sermon:

- Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 3, Exodus
- The Gospel According to John (The New International Commentary on the New Testament)
- I would try to use Blue Letter Bible or Bible Hub for original language study
- I would probably look closer into the forms of love shown in John 21 and compare the kind of love

Jesus asks, and the one Peter gives.