As many of you know, my family and I were on vacation the last couple of weeks. We had a great and joyful time with our children. They will remember this vacation for a long time, and we are grateful for that.

Nevertheless, I must also tell you that the days leading up to our departure were highly stressful. So, we were going on a cruise, and in order to board the ship, we needed to provide a negative covid test for each of us. If one of us had a positive result, no one would board the ship.

Can you imagine that? You plan for this time for months, and suddenly, everything can be shut down without you being able to do anything about it. That will give you a lot of anxiety—just ask my wife.

We had to tell our kids that there was a chance that everything could be canceled if we did not get a negative result on the tests (“The one test you don’t want to pass!” Santiago jokingly said). My wife could not wait to know, so the day before our test we did our own testing at home and it was negative—that alleviated the stress a little bit, but that did not count for what we needed. Still holding our breath.

Long story short, we took the tests the next day and everyone tested negative. We had prepared ourselves mentally for a bad outcome, but everything was right in the end. Man were we happy and loud, shouting with all the joys! No more stress or uncertainty after that moment.

I share this with you because that experience helped me realize how often all of us are overwhelmed by stressful circumstances that are beyond our power and control and the only thing we can do is hope things will be right soon. There is nothing else you can do but pray and wait, almost forcing yourself to believe and trust in a positive outcome (I mean negative but positive, right?).

How can we trust during the waiting time that everything will be alright? Even more so, as things around us may seem to be getting out of control and there is little to nothing we can do about it.

During those moments, it is important to remember that the Christian journey has nothing to do with getting what we want the way we want it but with becoming the kind of person God created us to be: good, kind, generous, and faithful. So, when I say that we trust against difficult circumstances that things will be alright, I do not mean that we will get our way, but that ultimately God will accomplish God’s purposes and exceed our expectations by far.

 I have witnessed that many times in my journey as a disciple of Jesus. I can tell you stories when I thought how unfair a situation was only to see God turning it into an amazing experience that helped me grow as a person and be a better leader. Without the struggle, I would not know what it means to trust and be patient.

Because of these experiences, I learned to trust God by remembering who God is and what God has done for me. I don’t always experience a “victory” the way I would wish, but over time God always makes things right. If anything, the rough seasons have gifted me the certainty that although I may be going through difficult times, God will make things right if I stay the course.

Of course, our faith does not exempt us from suffering and disappointment—even with our faith, we still deal with difficult situations that may or may not be of our own making. Things may not be right for a while, and you may not “get on the ship,” but our faith and hope tell us that God will eventually carry us through every challenge and disappointment.

For this, one of the most significant challenges Christians face after experiencing the joy of salvation is remembering God’s goodness throughout their lives. Often, our faith may become monotonous. This happens when we get to a comfortable place, settle, and stop seeking growth. We lose the excitement for the new and adventurous. Soon, the next thing that happens is that our memory of who God is and does begins the wane. That, my friends, is not a good place to be or stay for long. It makes us feeble and pessimistic.

So, in such moments, we need to shake off the dust and remember the blessings and goodness of God and where God brought us from because if we don’t keep the memory of our experience with God fresh, we can abandon hope when life gets difficult. We can let go and forget all the goodness and promises of a blessed future.

With this in mind, today, I want to talk about how remembering our faith gives us hope for the future and fills us with what I call “all the joys” even when we may be going through difficult times. (By “all the joys” I mean our state of being when we are content and grateful in all circumstances.)

The Scripture for today’s message is Psalms 100. It is only five verses, but it teaches us much about faith and hope and how to live a life with all the joys. It reads,

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

Know that the Lord is God.
It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him, bless his name.

For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

It is believed that Moses wrote this Psalm. This is important to understand why the author said these words.

What do we know about Moses? We know Moses was miraculously saved when he was just a baby after Pharaoh was persecuting the Hebrew children in Egypt to get rid of them. We know he was raised in the house of Pharaoh, and for years he was like a prince in Egypt. We know one day he had to run away from everything because, in his desire to defend a fellow Hebrew man, he killed an Egyptian guard. For 40 years, he kept away until God called him to go back and save his people from Egyptian slavery. Through him, God accomplished the deliverance of his people and led them to the land he had promised to Abraham and Sarah to establish them as a nation.

If Moses wrote this, then, when we read, “Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture,” it takes a profound turn. Moses is telling us, “We are the people of God; remember where he brought us from and how he saved us and gave us a place to raise our families. And it is the Lord who will continue to guide us.”

Moses and his fellow Hebrew people had many reasons to worship God and be thankful. They endured persecution, death, slavery, injustice, and all kinds of abuse, and when they sought God for deliverance, God saved them. But they had to remember that, and often, they forgot. They suffered not only the oppression of their enemies but also the consequences of their rebellions and sinful behavior when they forget who they were and let go of God.

When and why Moses said this gives an insight into the significance of this Psalm. They were journeying to the Promised Land and Moses knew they had a short memory and were inclined to complain and see the negative in their lives even if the blessing was in front of them.

Does this happen to you? Do we forget the blessings because we focus on the negatives? This is a difficult practice for sure. We are surrounded by so much negative stuff that we are susceptible to forgetting the good.

So, when Moses said, “For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations,” he was encouraging people to remember where they had come from and to let their memory of who God is and what God has done for them be a guiding principle in their lives as they shout praises of joy to God.

This is what we need to practice, too, remembering God’s goodness and keeping our eyes on the promises, otherwise, we could be inclined to be complainers instead of people of hope and gratitude. We need to remember where we have come from and let our memory of who God is and what God has done for us be our guiding principle into the future. Instead of letting disappointment and negative experiences discourage us and dictate how we live, what if we let all the good memories and achievements be the spring that sends us forward with all the joys?

I know we have many reasons to be pessimistic, discouraged, and disappointed by just looking at what’s happening around the world. We have lived long enough to see that life is challenging. But isn’t that what everyone else experiences? Isn’t that what Moses, king David, Jesus’ Mother Mary, and all the disciples experienced too? Isn’t that what our parents and people we respect and care about also have endured? Yet, they were able to find the ability to raise a prayer, a song of thanksgiving for all the joys of life they received and appreciated.

You see, having all the joys is not about having no concerns but about knowing that God has been with us, is with us, and will ever be with us and because of that we know we will be alright.

My friends, faith gives us the power and ability to live with a positive mentality even when the dark and negative voices of this world try to shut us down—even when our own memories may yell at us, telling us, “You have nothing to be happy and thankful about!” But this is what faith does for and in us; it gives us the power to overcome even the most hurting and dark voices and memories of our past and around us. Faith gives us the power to see the good, even in our lives’ darkest and most disappointing moments.

Do you long for joy no matter what happens in the world? Do you want to know that you will not lose hope even when life is not what it is supposed to be yet? Then, stick with God and live in an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Hold Jesus’ hand and don’t ever let go. And don’t let your past failures, disappointments, or pain become the guiding principle in your life; instead, allow your experiences of deliverance and trust in God to move you forward, saying, “For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.”

Last, keep this in mind, “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28) Let this be the guiding principle for your life that leads you to celebrate your faith with all the joys remembering who God is and what God has done for you.