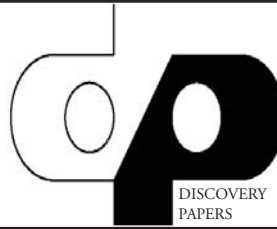


LET THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD SAY SO

*SERIES: LET US KNEEL BEFORE THE LORD,
OUR MAKER*



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Psalm 107
1st Message
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Two important events lie before us this week. Our nation will elect its 44th president, and this church will convene its mission's conference. The two are related in ways that we can observe. One attends to this immediate moment in history. The other gives attention to the great news that lasts forever. One focuses on a man who will assume a mantle of national leadership, the other on the man who is God, who has begun the revolution that will culminate in a new heaven and earth.

We have responsibilities in both spheres. Elections call for citizens to 'speak up' at the ballot box. Jesus' servants should also 'speak up,' testifying to what God has done for them. With this in mind we turn to Psalm 107.

There are four stories of God rescuing desperate souls recorded in this psalm, and we will do well to learn the importance of telling our stories as these rescued ones tell theirs.

The psalm begins with a call to attention.
Psalm 107:1-3:

**Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
Whom He has redeemed from the hand of
the adversary
And gathered from the lands,
From the east and from the west,
From the north and from the south.**

There are two responsibilities given to us in those three verses. The first is the call to give thanks to God. Turn your face toward the living God and speak a word of thanks to him. The second responsibility is to speak to others. Speak words of redemption to anyone who will listen. Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story.

Give thanks to God, for he is good. And he is not only good for a moment, his lovingkindness lasts forever. Failure to give thanks starts us on the path towards lifelessness. Enthusiasm in giving thanks makes us healthy and aligns us with the way things really are.

In addition to grateful worship, we have a story to tell. I was once frightened, I was once broken, I was once rebellious. I was once lost, and yet God found me. Beginning in verse 4 we hear stories of four redeemed souls bearing

witness.

In each story, we will observe two verses that are repeated word for word. The first is this:

“Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He delivered them out of their distresses.” (Psalm 107:6, 13, 19, 28).

The second is:

“Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, and for His wonders to the sons of men!” Psalm 107:8, 15, 21, 31).

The first testimony.
Psalm 107:4-9:

**They wandered in the wilderness in a desert region;
They did not find a way to an inhabited city.
They were hungry and thirsty;
Their soul fainted within them.
Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble;
He delivered them out of their distresses.
He led them also by a straight way,
To go to an inhabited city.
Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,
And for His wonders to the sons of men!
For He has satisfied the thirsty soul,
And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.**

We are first introduced to lonely wanderers. Faint with hunger and thirst they long for connection, for an “inhabited city” where they have a home and are a welcome part of a community. So these heart-starved wanderers cried out to the Lord in their distress, and he delivered them.

Infants do not thrive unless they are held. A baby whose physical needs are all met will still die if it lacks human touch. It is a basic human need to be connected to others. We live in crowded urban environments, but many are lonely still—uncertain if anyone will notice their absence

or lift them up when they fall.

In these verses we hear a cry to God and observe his response. He intervened immediately (“by a straight way”³). The heart-starved wanderer is taken to a community that becomes home. The testimony of the redeemed wanderer is this: “{God} has satisfied the thirsty soul, and the hungry soul he has filled with what is good” (Psalm 107:9). Let me tell you about my God. You don’t have to be alone.

The second account speaks of prisoners.
Psalm 107:10-16:

**There were those who dwelt in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
Prisoners in misery and chains,
Because they had rebelled against the
words of God
And spurned the counsel of the Most High.**

Here is a different problem. These are people who once knew better, yet have chosen to stiffen their necks and spurn the counsel of the Most High.

**Therefore He humbled their heart with labor;
They stumbled and there was none to help.
Then they cried out to the LORD in their
trouble;
He saved them out of their distresses.
He brought them out of darkness and the
shadow of death
And broke their bands apart.
Let them give thanks to the LORD for His
lovingkindness,
And for His wonders to the sons of men!
For He has shattered gates of bronze
And cut bars of iron asunder.**

A few weeks ago, I was the speaker at our outreach ministry to those struggling with drugs, alcohol, and other addictions. This particular Friday was at the end of the week when the US economy took a serious nosedive as the house of cards built on insatiable greed collapsed. The similarities were hard to miss. All addictions lead to imprisonment—chemical substances, money, power, and ‘drugs, sex, and rock ’n roll.’ We choose defiance and imagine we can control the outcome. Yet, God has arranged the world so that sin has consequences (“He humbled their heart” [Psalm 107:12]).

In Charles Dickens’ famous redemption tale A Christmas Carol, the ghost of Jacob Marley appears to Scrooge rattling chains forged by a lifetime of greed and heartless-

ness and cruelty, and he says that for all eternity he will carry these chains of his own choices.

But these verses are not written as a warning; they are an account of rescue.

The Lord answers the prisoners in their distress.
Psalm 107:14-16:

**He brought them out of darkness and the
shadow of death,
And broke their bands apart.
Let them give thanks to the LORD for His
lovingkindness,
And for His wonders to the sons of men!**

So the testimony of the redeemed prisoner is this: My God shatters gates of bronze and cuts bars of iron apart. There is no prison from which he cannot release me. No addiction or misery is beyond his repair. He will answer your cry as well.

The third story is the story of fools.
Psalm 107:17-22:

**Fools, because of their rebellious way,
And because of their iniquities, were
afflicted.
Their soul abhorred all kinds of food,
And they drew near to the gates of death.
Then they cried out to the LORD in their
trouble;
He saved them out of their distresses.
He sent His word and healed them,
And delivered them from their destructions.
Let them give thanks to the LORD for His
lovingkindness,
And for His wonders to the sons of men!
Let them also offer sacrifices of thanksgiving,
And tell of His works with joyful singing.**

This is a story of rescue from self-destruction. Named ‘fools,’ these people choose self hatred as a way of being self absorbed. Depression often occurs for reasons that the sufferers cannot control, but that circumstance is not in view here. This is a story of rebels who deface what God loves and worship themselves by destroying themselves (refusing nutrition and drawing near to death). Finally, when the drama loses its appeal and they awake to distress, a cry goes forth to God.

We read in verse 20: “He sent his word and healed

them.” For the person who is living in his own self-chosen darkness, liberation is found in the word of God. A strong declaration of the biblical gospel clears away the dark lies. Our worth is established by God’s love, not a broken fixation on ourselves. These folks are made whole by the healing power of Scripture.

And what is the testimony that follows?
Verse 22:

**Let them also offer sacrifices of thanksgiving,
And tell of His works with joyful singing.**

No longer drawing near to death, these redeemed ones sing for joy.

The fourth testimony comes from magnates, captains of industry, and big wigs.
Psalm 107:23-32:

**Those who go down to the sea in ships,
Who do business on great waters;
They have seen the works of the LORD,
And His wonders in the deep.
For He spoke and raised up a stormy wind,
Which lifted up the waves of the sea.
They rose up to the heavens, they went
down to the depths;
Their soul melted away in their misery.
They reeled and staggered like a drunken
man,
And were at their wits’ end.
Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
And He brought them out of their distresses.
He caused the storm to be still,
So that the waves of the sea were hushed.
Then they were glad because they were quiet,
So He guided them to their desired haven.
Let them give thanks to the LORD for His
lovingkindness,
And for His wonders to the sons of men!
Let them extol Him also in the congregation
of the people,
And praise Him at the seat of the elders.**

This is an interesting time in our economic cycle. We have seen tycoons of finance, the so-called ‘masters of the universe,’ stagger and fall in the throes of a sudden economic storm. Psalm 107:23-32 tells an ancient version of the same story.

Recall the insight of the book of James. “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit’ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, {you ought} to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.’” James 4:13-15

“If the Lord wills.” He controls the universe. He can flatten us with a storm if he chooses to do so, and in our helplessness, we can do nothing but call on him. So the testimony of the self-important who are saved from destruction is this: “We have seen the power of the Lord, and he has shown us our need. We have cried out to him, and he has guided us safely to our destination.” They are assigned to speak to others who sit in “the seat of elders,” with human status that might keep them from vital faith in God.

The first three verses of Psalm 107 offer a succinct definition of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus; give thanks to God for his lovingkindness and tell others what he has done for you. Speak up in worship and witness. The four stories that begin in verse 4 should encourage us to follow their example.

This psalm finishes by noting that God’s ways are surprising and that he intervenes in every place there is a need.
Psalm 107:33-43:

**He changes rivers into a wilderness
And springs of water into a thirsty ground;
A fruitful land into a salt waste,
Because of the wickedness of those who
dwell in it.
He changes a wilderness into a pool of water
And a dry land into springs of water;
And there He makes the hungry to dwell,
So that they may establish an inhabited city,
And sow fields and plant vineyards,
And gather a fruitful harvest.
Also He blesses them and they multiply
greatly,
And He does not let their cattle decrease.
When they are diminished and bowed down
Through oppression, misery and sorrow,
He pours contempt upon princes
And makes them wander in a pathless waste.
But He sets the needy securely on high
away from affliction,**

**And makes his families like a flock.
The upright see it and are glad;
But all unrighteousness shuts its mouth.
Who is wise? Let him give heed to these
things,
And consider the lovingkindnesses of the
LORD.**

The conclusion is apt. The wise will search out the ways of God and think deeply about his lovingkindness. May we be counted among the wise.

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