

## **Psalm 107**

- <sup>1</sup> Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.
- <sup>2</sup> Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story—  
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,  
<sup>3</sup> those he gathered from the lands,  
from east and west, from north and south.
- <sup>4</sup> Some wandered in desert wastelands,  
finding no way to a city where they could settle.
- <sup>5</sup> They were hungry and thirsty,  
and their lives ebbed away.
- <sup>6</sup> Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,  
and he delivered them from their distress.
- <sup>7</sup> He led them by a straight way  
to a city where they could settle.
- <sup>8</sup> Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love  
and his wonderful deeds for mankind,  
<sup>9</sup> for he satisfies the thirsty  
and fills the hungry with good things.
- <sup>10</sup> Some sat in darkness, in utter darkness,  
prisoners suffering in iron chains,  
<sup>11</sup> because they rebelled against God's commands  
and despised the plans of the Most High.
- <sup>12</sup> So he subjected them to bitter labor;  
they stumbled, and there was no one to help.
- <sup>13</sup> Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,  
and he saved them from their distress.
- <sup>14</sup> He brought them out of darkness, the utter darkness,  
and broke away their chains.
- <sup>15</sup> Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love  
and his wonderful deeds for mankind,  
<sup>16</sup> for he breaks down gates of bronze  
and cuts through bars of iron.
- <sup>42</sup> The upright see and rejoice,  
but all the wicked shut their mouths.
- <sup>43</sup> Let the one who is wise heed these things  
and ponder the loving deeds of the LORD.

Dear friends of our Lord Jesus,

Almost 20 years ago something happened in my life that taught me that God can bring joy after tears. The Lord called my sister Geraldine home to himself the Saturday before Thanksgiving Day. She was 47 years old and full of life.

I know that many people here have had similar experiences. Your struggle may have been different but the experience of going through a hard time is not unique to me. As a congregation we have prayed for many different people with various sicknesses. Some have been healed completely or are in remission. Others remain sick and some have died. We've faced many deaths in the congregation once again this year. Meanwhile, people have suffered through changes to their job due to cutbacks, shutdowns or reorganization. Others have had family and marriage problems. Some deal with physical challenges or mental illness issues or loneliness. Some have faced financial hardships while others battle addictions. The list goes on.

To move forward, we need to get our heads and hearts focused properly on God. If we enter Thanksgiving Day thinking only about what we've lost or suffered, then it will be a difficult day to give thanks, not only today but every day. Therefore we need to turn to God and his word to find help and hope.

Psalms 107 basically extols God for his deliverance from distress. It doesn't give us the details about the occasion for writing the psalm but it seems like it has to do with the deliverance from exile. There was a time in Israel's history that the people went astray from God, so God allowed them to be conquered by the Babylonians who put them through some serious hardships that are mentioned throughout this psalm. After about 70 years in a different land—in exile—the Lord returns them to their homes and restores them. That seems to be the gist of v.3 which talks about how God

*Ps 107:3 ... gathered [his people] from the lands,  
from east and west, from north and south.*

So the background of this psalm is the people of God reflecting on their former sorrow and how God has gotten them through it and out of it.

Having suffered and been delivered, the people now begin their praise with these words:

*Ps 107:1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.*

There is an immediate acknowledgement that any thanksgiving needs to be made in response to the Lord who is good because his love is unending. He's the reason for giving thanks. If we take our eyes off God, we'll lose sight of what there is to give thanks for. Moreover, the psalmist is using God's covenant name, *the LORD*, in our NIV Bibles. And then he immediately highlights the LORD's covenant with us which includes his enduring love for his children.

Sometimes we go through hard times and think God has forgotten us or doesn't love us. Nothing is farther from the truth. And that's why what we "feel" always needs to be corrected by the truth of what God says to us about himself, his

relationship to us or anything else. We shouldn't downplay our feelings on the one hand. They are good to some degree. But just because we happen to feel a certain way doesn't mean that what we are feeling is how things really are. The opening verse of this psalm drives that home for us: The LORD our God is good because his love for us is unending! That's something we can count on, something we need to remember and something we definitely need to give thanks for! And maybe we need to dwell on that even more when our feelings aren't there yet.

After the opening praise, the writer says in effect, "we've got to tell others about this!" "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good." Then comes this in v.2:

*Ps 107:2 Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story—*

*those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,*

The psalm tells us that the natural response to deliverance or salvation is praise and praise of an almost spontaneous nature. The redeemed of the Lord can't hold it in. "Let's tell others about it" is the tone of his message. We've been delivered, we're redeemed, so let's get the message out there. Tell others. This is too good to keep to ourselves!! You can't hold it in!"

So let's look at what the psalmist is so excited about. What do the redeemed of the Lord have to shout about? What has God done? Well, some pretty amazing stuff. We won't look at all the details, but we are told that God has rescued the wanderers, the prisoners, the sick, and the storm-tossed. Verses 4-7 tell how the people were hungry and thirsty, despairing of life and residing in a desert. They were in distress. But the Lord redeemed them. The next group in verses 10-12 are described as prisoners who are bound in shackles, forced to work and stumbling under their burden. But the Lord redeemed them. The third group, described in verses 17-22, was delivered from sickness. They became sick because of their own foolishness and rebellious ways. But the Lord redeemed them. And the final group mentioned in verses 23-32 includes people caught in fearful storms out on the sea. They too were rescued by the Lord.

Now, who do you suppose might be the most thankful on the day he or she sits down for a "thanksgiving return-from-exile dinner"? Well, I suspect it will be the people who have received the most.

One day when Jesus was anointed by a sinful woman some of the disciples wanted to chase her away, but Jesus reminded them that the one who is forgiven the most will love him the most (Jn 7:47).

In a similar way "those who have never truly suffered may not appreciate God as much as those who have matured under hardship. Those who have seen God work in times of distress have a deeper insight into his lovingkindness." Or as it was said in some study Bible note I read, "If you have experienced great trials, you have the potential for great praise." By God's grace we can get to the other side of hard times and be thankful for what God taught us and showed us about himself and our own selves through the journey.

None of us would choose hardships as a road to maturity. But our loving heavenly Father does. Our God whose love endures forever promises to work

every detail of our lives together for our good. He promises that not a hair will fall from our head without some divine purpose. That's his promise and regardless of how we might feel, that's the truth that needs to inform our thoughts. That's the truth that will help us find comfort in hard days and hope for a brighter future.

The writer recognizes how God has rescued all kinds of people. Not one of God's covenant people is outside of his sight and interest. The people in exile are brought back by God from every direction—north, south, east and west. But in seventy years of bondage not everyone is coming back. Not every family is going to have every member around their thanksgiving return-from-exile dinner table. There were lessons to be learned through the suffering.

And whether the suffering was in the way of sickness, death, or other hardship, the psalmist is able to thank the Lord for his unfailing love. The entire congregation who sang this psalm was looking back on what they'd been through and they were thanking the Lord for his unfailing love.

The singers recognize that sometimes our hardship is a result of our sin and God loves us enough to discipline us as Hebrews 12 teaches—

*Heb 12:11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*

God disciplines in order to turn us back to himself and keep us from going astray.

In other cases, a hardship arises to serve another divine purpose. Sometimes a difficulty helps us see how God cares for us even though sin has distorted God's beautiful creation. God could have turned his back on the world and on his people, but he chose to have mercy. He sent Jesus his Son to redeem sinners like us. Some of the exiles mentioned in Psalm 107 talk about having their physical hunger and thirst satisfied by God with good things. Jesus promises that he is the one we must turn to in faith so that we will never be hungry and thirsty again spiritually. He's the one who is able to give new life to us after brokenness and sorrow.

All four groups in this psalm mention how they've been delivered and each echoes the same refrain. It's found in vv. 8, 15, 21, 31:

*Ps 107:8 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind...*

The people of God who sang this psalm recognized that God loved them. Through every hardship they mention, they now look back on it after they've come through the storm and they see the unfailing love of the LORD. In fact, the closing verse speaks of "**the great love** of the LORD."

*Ps 107:43 Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the LORD.*

I can honestly say that it was hard to accept the Lord's decision and certainly to give thanks to him after my sister died. But looking back, I recall how God was so close to us in that time of immense sorrow. I remember coming home from the hospital after she died. I was staying at her house. For some reason, I

turned on her stereo and the first song that came on was “I will praise you in the storm” by Casting Crowns. That was a gift from God. And he continued to give us grace to pray and to move forward. I remember receiving the grace to believe and know without a doubt that our departed loved one is with him. I remember how that was one of the saddest times of my life and yet it stands out as one of the richest times of my life. On the one hand, I cried tears of sorrow because my sister was gone. But on the other hand, I cried tears of joy because God was so close to us. I cried when I thought of God’s mercy to us as sinners and our comfort of belonging to him in body and soul and in life and in death. I wept as I read emails and cards and received hugs and meals and flowers from many different people. It was as if Jesus himself was caring for us through his people. And that kind of experience happened again in a much deeper and longer period when our daughter Rachel was so sick. Today, it is because of those experiences that I can say with the psalm, “*Let the redeemed of the LORD give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love.*”

This psalm reminds us to tell each other about God’s unfailing love as well. Remember what v.2 said?

*Ps 107:2 Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—*

Think about a story of God’s redeeming love in your life. Tell others about it. This is good for our faith!

At the Gather Conference in Vancouver a couple weeks ago, Patsy and I basically had a 3-day Bible study on Luke 24, the two men on the road to Emmaus. The leaders used that story to help us tell stories of God’s unfailing love to his Church. We heard from all over the CRC including Michigan and California as well as BC and Alberta. Stories of God’s care for the church after periods of trial, like the shutdowns from Covid. Stories of the Lord bringing revival through new groups of people joining a church. And even stories of his presence when a church is faced with closure. All of these were good and encouraging stories reminding us of God’s unfailing love.

When Patsy and I host the Seniors Tea on Wednesday afternoons, we ask people to share a story of an answered prayer or a time when they felt the Lord’s nearness. We’ve been amazed and blessed by those testimonies. God showing up in amazing ways to confirm faith, to give comfort, to lead and direct. He’s there for all of us in and through every trial we face, giving grace to the dying, the grieving, the struggling and the hurting. “*Let the redeemed of the LORD give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love.*”

By God’s grace we can look back like Psalm 107 does, reflecting on some of the hardest times of our lives and seeing that the LORD was and still is with us. Sometimes we can see it right away and other times we can’t see it until we’re farther down the road. And even if we don’t see it, we have God’s promise that he loves us and nothing comes to us apart from his love. “*Let the redeemed of the LORD give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love.*”

We can give thanks today—no matter what we’ve gone through—because of the Lord’s unfailing love. Even when we aren’t quite at the point yet that we see

it, we can know that one day we'll see it clearly and like the psalmist we'll give thanks for the Lord's unfailing love. It is unfailing. That means he is 100% guaranteed to come through for us as children of God by faith in Christ.

*Ps 107: 1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.*

*<sup>2</sup> Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story—*

As the Lord brought the exiles out of Babylon, so all who trust in Jesus as their Saviour are redeemed from sin by the Lord. We are given a new beginning. And he promises to be with us throughout our lives. He gets us through low points in our lives and brings joy after tears. Therefore, let us heed the psalmist's encouragement: "*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good... Let the redeemed say this!*" Let us stop and look at our lives. There are hardships we endure but there is also evidence of God's hand, often seen through the hands of his people, in a warm embrace, a strong handshake, a tear of understanding, a meal made with love and served without words, a ride to the hospital, a prayer, a card, an email or some flowers.

Most of all it is shown to us through our Saviour. As Jesus showed us the full extent of his love and God's goodness by offering his life to save us, so he shows his love for us in carrying us through all the chapters of our lives, whether bright or dark. He delivers us and remains with us. So "*let us give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love.*"

PRAYER:

Our almighty, covenant God. We praise you for your grace and mercy. We thank you for your unfailing love. We acknowledge our own weakness and our brokenness. We need you so desperately, even more than we realize ourselves. Thank you for your unfailing love for us even when we fail you. Open our eyes more and more to see how you are at work in our lives. And when we can't see it, help us—knowing who you are and your faithfulness—to trust that you are faithfully unfolding our lives with your divine grace. Fill us with praise-filled peace as we live for you each day. Amen.

**THANKSGIVING DAY SERVICE**  
**OCTOBER 14, 2024**  
10:00 AM

**THE BEGINNING**

Welcome

- \* Call to Worship: Psalm 95:1-7b

Pastor: <sup>1</sup> Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;  
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

**People: <sup>2</sup> Let us come before him with thanksgiving  
and extol him with music and song.**

Pastor: <sup>3</sup> For the Lord is the great God,  
the great King above all gods.

**People: <sup>4</sup> In his hand are the depths of the earth,  
and the mountain peaks belong to him.**

**<sup>5</sup> The sea is his, for he made it,  
and his hands formed the dry land.**

Pastor: <sup>6</sup> Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;

**People: <sup>7</sup> for he is our God  
and we are the people of his pasture,  
the flock under his care.**

- \* God's Greeting

- \* Gathering Songs & Prayers:

*Let All Things Now Living*

PsH 453/LUYH5/ccli 4445649

Prayer

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe.

You have created this world in splendor,  
**and your Spirit renews the face of the earth.**

You have made us in your image,  
**and you renew us in the image of your Son.**

You have given us your law,  
**and your Spirit leads us in the ways of righteousness.**

You have grafted us into your covenant of grace,  
**and you have written your law on our hearts.**

You promise to make all things new,  
**and you give us your Spirit as the first fruits of a renewed creation.**

All glory be to you, Lord our God, giver of every good and perfect gift.

**Alleluia! Amen.**

*Blessed Be Your Name*

LUYH 343/ccli 3798438

Prayer

How priceless is your unfailing love, O God!

**People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.**

They feast on the abundance of your house;

**you give them drink from your river of delights.**

You feed us from the fields of abundance;

**Thanks and praise and glory to God. Amen.**

*Sing to the Lord of Harvest*

PsH 458/LUYH 398:1,2,3/ccli 2380232

## THE PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING TO OUR GOD

Praise Litany: Psalm 136: 1-9, 23-26

Reader: Give thanks to the Lord for He is good

**People: His love endures forever**

R: Give thanks to the God of gods

**P: His love endures forever**

R: Give thanks to the Lord of Lords

**P: His love endures forever**

R: to Him who alone does great wonders

**P: His love endures forever**

R: who by His understanding made the heavens

**P: His love endures forever**

R: who spread out the earth upon the waters

**P: His love endures forever**

R: who made the great lights

**P: His love endures forever**

R: the sun to govern the day

**P: His love endures forever**

R: the moon and stars to govern the nights

**P: His love endures forever**

R: to the One who remembered us in our low estate

**P: His love endures forever**

R: and freed us from our enemies

**P: His love endures forever**

R: and who gives food to every creature

**P: His love endures forever**

**All: Give thanks to the God of heaven;**

**His love endures forever!!!!**

\* Song: *Forever*

LUYH 578/ccli 3148428

## THE WORD OF GOD

Prayer for the Word

Reading of Scripture: Psalm 107

read by

Sermon: ***Let the Redeemed Give Thanks to the Lord***

Prayer of Application

## THE RESPONSE

\* Hymn: *Give Thanks to God, for Good is He*

PsH 182/ccli 2293240

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Our Thanksgiving Offering: Mortgage Reduction

Hymn: *We Praise You, O God*

LUYH 560/ccl 4708207

## THE DISMISSAL

\* Benediction

\* Doxology: *Ten Thousand Reasons*

LUYH 559/ccli 6016351

\* Postlude