

sermon study summary

October 7 / 8, 2023

Thanksgiving

Speaker: Pastor Kent Priebe

Psalm 107 begins by telling us to, 'Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever'. Although we might always wish to give thanks to God, at times this can be challenging because of problems/catastrophes that overwhelm us, and we just cannot see how God is loving or good in these situations. Psalm 107 teaches us to refrain from attempting to resolve the problems ourselves, but turn to God and ask for His help. God never fails us, and His resolution of our problems will fill us with praise and thanks to Him. Although we know this is a simple, basic truth of the Christian life, we still struggle to put it in practice. In this Psalm, we see four examples of things that can go wrong in our lives, and as we review them we may be able to identify problems/challenges we face ourselves.

The first story is about a group who are lost in more than one way: they're wandering in the wilderness, don't know where to go, have no place they belong to where they can put down roots, are thirsty, hungry, exhausted, aimless, homeless, purposeless, vulnerable, uncertain about the future, etc. and they feel like their lives are slipping away. They don't know what to do. Then they cried out to God – and He delivers them without any judgement because He is always merciful and comes to their rescue; and they thank Him for His goodness.

The second story is about problems the group brought upon their selves by their choices and willful decisions, rebelling, disobeying God's commands, and turning their backs on Him. Consequences? They lost their freedom and became prisoners. They thought they knew better than God in doing what they thought was right. However, when they repented and turned to God for help, He broke down the prison walls and freed them.

In the third story, once again, the group sinned against God, resulting in them becoming very sick; they nearly died. When they cried out to God, He had mercy and through His Word healed them, rescuing them from the grave.

The fourth story is about sea merchants, transporting goods over the sea on their trade routes; we are not told that they were either good or bad. However, while they were sailing along, God spoke and stirred up a tempest that caused their ships to rise high on the waves and then dip deep into the depths of the ocean; the sailors were terrified, they feared death and were at their wits end! Then they cried out to God for help; He stilled the storm and led them safely to their destination.

Are we able to know and understand a God who not only causes storms but who, when asked, is **THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN CALM THEM?** God, because of His infinite love for us, wants us to grow into a deeper trust and dependence in Him. Therefore, although it grieves Him to cause us pain and suffering, He brings storms into our lives. This truth will only make sense and be acceptable to us if – rather than choosing comfort, success and ease – our highest value is intimacy, a close and personal relationship and a surrendered life to God.

The turning point in all four stories is the same: 'Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them from their distress'. Let us remember to do the same – our Lord is **EVER LOVING AND MERCIFUL!**

sermon study guide

IN – PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. Name one of the most meaningful Thanksgiving traditions you've ever done. What makes it meaningful?
2. Have you struggled to feel gratitude because of challenging circumstances in your life? How did you handle it?

UP – PURSUE GOD

3. What four situations does Psalm 107 recount where people were in trouble (vv. 4-5, 10-12, 17-18, 23-27)? What was the solution in each of these situations?
4. What do you think is the significance of starting Psalm 107 with "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever"?

OUT – PURSUE MISSION

5. Share which of the four situations you most identify with.
6. Discuss situations you are aware of in which God has caused, then calmed, a storm in a person's life. Why might God both cause and calm storms? What does this tell us about His character and His love? If someone in the group is in a storm right now, take the time to pray for him or her.

For Personal Reflection / Prayer:

What does it mean to you to cry out to the LORD in your trouble? Reflect on a time you did and remember how God responded. Praise Him and give thanks.

THE WORD

Psalm 107:1, 4-6, 10-13, 17-18, 23-27 (NIV)

- ¹ Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.
- ⁴ Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle.
- ⁵ They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away.
- ⁶ Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.
- ¹⁰ Some sat in darkness, in utter darkness, prisoners suffering in iron chains,
- ¹¹ because they rebelled against God's commands and despised the plans of the Most High.
- ¹² So he subjected them to bitter labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help.
- ¹³ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress.
- ¹⁷ Some became fools through their rebellious ways and suffered affliction because of their iniquities.
- ¹⁸ They loathed all food and drew near the gates of death.
- ¹⁹ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress.
- ²³ Some went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters.
- ²⁴ They saw the works of the Lord, his wonderful deeds in the deep.
- ²⁵ For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves.
- ²⁶ They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away.
- ²⁷ They reeled and staggered like drunkards; they were at their wits' end.
- ²⁸ Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress.
- ²⁹ He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed.
- ³⁰ They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven.
- ³¹ Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind.

This week's writers: Asha Phillips, Elsa Henderson, Gene and Karen Gibbs and Jorel Quemuel