

March 10, 2024

“Wherever You’re At”

Psalm 107: 1-3, 17-22 (but really the whole psalm)

### **Intro:**

Sometimes I wonder if the idea and the action of being thankful is not natural or instinctive. You might disagree: “but I say thank you all the time”. And that may be true, but does that thankfulness go deeper within you than words? Should there be a thankfulness that explodes out of you from the core of your being? As children, we often had to be told to say thank you. It wasn’t an instinctive act. Even as adults, our expressions of thankfulness can feel a bit flat even if they are genuine. Perhaps that is the nature of expressing thanks. Perhaps saying “Thank you” is enough. Perhaps anything more than a simple thank you can be seen as “over the top” and therefore disingenuous. Psalm 107 invites us to consider thankfulness on a deeper level, especially as it relates to our experience of God.

### **The Psalm:**

The psalmist calls us to be thankful, and to direct that thankfulness towards God. This is different than praise, which is a more generalized form of worship. This is a response to something specific that God has done, something that flows from the goodness of His character and who He is.

The invitation is to intentionally explore the goodness and faithfulness of God in your life. To honestly examine where and how God has been faithful to you, where His goodness has overwhelmed your story and brought hope and grace into your life.

What response should we have after such an examination? To give thanks not just in quiet and private, but in public. To give thanks in worship with fellow believers, who will recognize your story in theirs, and combine those stories in thankfulness. To give thanks also in the home, the workplace, or wherever you happen to be where people would benefit from hearing about God’s faithfulness and how your

life has been impacted by it. Speak out! Tell others exactly how God has been faithful and worked in your life in such a way as to make you thankful.

Before you start thinking that this sounds like an impossible task that would leave little time for anything else, the psalm does focus things for us. Specifically, the psalmist wants us to concentrate on the way that God has redeemed us. In what ways has He faithfully stood by you and restored you back to relationship with Him? How has He saved, or rescued, you from a destructive life that you had been living to that point?

After the introductory verses of invitation to give thanks, the psalmist spends the rest of the psalm giving some examples of people who have been redeemed. In other words, situations that people that God has rescued people from. This is not an exhaustive list, but it demonstrates how God's faithfulness can look, so that we can recognize His redeeming work when we look back at our own lives.

Do you recognize yourselves in these examples?

Verses 4-9: People who were lost and wandering in the wilderness, hungry and thirsty, seeking something outside of themselves to satisfy the inner longing for more than the pleasures of this world. Does this sound like your own experience of wrestling with the notion that there must be more to life than eating, sleeping, working, and then dying?

Verses 10-16: People who found themselves in a prison – not a prison of walls, but a prison of their own making because they had intentionally turned away from God, only to discover that distancing themselves from God did not bring the freedom they thought it would. A prison of not knowing who they were or their purpose in life.

Verses 17-22: People who made foolish decisions to satisfy a whim of desire, only to discover that giving in to desire without careful wisdom does not satisfy and leaves them feeling empty and starving for a life that matters.

Verses 23-32: People the psalmist describes as going off to sea in ships – those who had at one time been in fellowship with God, but chose to turn away from Him, scorning His goodness and power, only to be faced with the storms of life and no solid anchor to hold on to.

In all these examples, the psalmist shows not only the folly of human nature, but the faithfulness of God. No matter where we wander off to, no matter how we turn away from God, no matter which ways and excuses we use to make ourselves the gods of our lives – when all those fail and we are left lost and alone, God is still faithfully present with us. And not only is He faithfully present, but if we call out to Him, He then acts to draw us back to where there is love and purpose and hope in and through Him. He redeems and restores us from our foolishness.

In each of those case studies, the psalmist shows how God brings blessing and restoration to His people when they realize their need and call out to Him. He calms the storms, feeds the hungry, and releases the shackles that imprison. He gives freedom and belonging and purpose.

So yes! We should acknowledge that God has redeemed us, and not just in a quiet private prayer of thankfulness, but also out loud so that others might be encouraged by God's great love toward us, and find God present in their own space of need.

### **Conclusion:**

There is one other case where God is faithful that is not mentioned in the psalm, but needs to be mentioned. The examples that were given have a common theme of intentional distancing from God. The divide is easy to spot, and it is easy to recognize God's redeeming work because there is such a contrast. The person may not have been close to God in the first place, but is nonetheless seeking

greater meaning, or the person once did know God, but chose to turn away from Him.

But there is also the person who sits faithfully in the pew every Sunday morning but has lost the sense of closeness with God. They need God's redemption not because they have walked away, but because their faith has become stagnant. They are in a dry season of not seeing anything new under the sun. Worship and scripture and prayer feel meaningless, but they keep coming to church because that is the expected thing. God is faithfully present there as well. If this example feels close to home, then cry out to God and He will breathe new life into your experience. If you allow it, worship will cease to be dull, but will become something that draws you ever deeper into the presence of God and the experience of His love.

So, give thanks to God. See where He has been faithful – in your life, in someone else's life, even in the history of the church. And in seeing that, speak it out. Invite people, through the thankfulness that flows out from you, to find their own experience of God's faithful presence in their lives.

To God Be the Glory and Praise, Amen.