

Give Thanks to the Lord our Redeemer

Psalm 107

Pastor Jason Van Bommel

*Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever!*

*² Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
whom he has redeemed from trouble*

*³ and gathered in from the lands,
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.*

*⁴ Some wandered in desert wastes,
finding no way to a city to dwell in;*

*⁵ hungry and thirsty,
their soul fainted within them.*

*⁶ Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.*

*⁷ He led them by a straight way
till they reached a city to dwell in.*

*⁸ Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!*

*⁹ For he satisfies the longing soul,
and the hungry soul he fills with good things.*

*¹⁰ Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death,
prisoners in affliction and in irons,*

*¹¹ for they had rebelled against the words of God,
and spurned the counsel of the Most High.*

*¹² So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor;
they fell down, with none to help.*

*¹³ Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.*

*¹⁴ He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death,
and burst their bonds apart.*

*¹⁵ Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!*

- 16 For he shatters the doors of bronze
and cuts in two the bars of iron.*
- 17 Some were fools through their sinful ways,
and because of their iniquities suffered affliction;*
- 18 they loathed any kind of food,
and they drew near to the gates of death.*
- 19 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.*
- 20 He sent out his word and healed them,
and delivered them from their destruction.*
- 21 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!*
- 22 And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving,
and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!*
- 23 Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the great waters;*
- 24 they saw the deeds of the LORD,
his wondrous works in the deep.*
- 25 For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.*
- 26 They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their evil plight;*
- 27 they reeled and staggered like drunken men
and were at their wits' end.*
- 28 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.*
- 29 He made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.*
- 30 Then they were glad that the waters were quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.*
- 31 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!*
- 32 Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders.*

33 *He turns rivers into a desert,
 springs of water into thirsty ground,*
 34 *a fruitful land into a salty waste,
 because of the evil of its inhabitants.*
 35 *He turns a desert into pools of water,
 a parched land into springs of water.*
 36 *And there he lets the hungry dwell,
 and they establish a city to live in;*
 37 *they sow fields and plant vineyards
 and get a fruitful yield.*
 38 *By his blessing they multiply greatly,
 and he does not let their livestock diminish.*

39 *When they are diminished and brought low
 through oppression, evil, and sorrow,*
 40 *he pours contempt on princes
 and makes them wander in trackless wastes;*
 41 *but he raises up the needy out of affliction
 and makes their families like flocks.*
 42 *The upright see it and are glad,
 and all wickedness shuts its mouth.*

43 *Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things;
 let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD.*

Intro: What is Redemption?

Do you remember K-Mart layaway? Growing up as the fourth child of an enlisted Air Force serviceman, I remember K-Mart layaway. Apparently, K-Mart brought back layaway a few years ago, so it's a thing again. And yes, apparently, there are still K-Marts in the world, too. Who knew? Actually, I knew K-Mart still has a few stores operating, but I didn't know they still had layaway.

Well, for those of you who don't know what layaway is, it's a program still offered by K-Mart and Wal-Mart, which allows you to go to the store, pick out some items, make a down payment on them, and then have the store lay them away for you – holding onto them until you finish paying for them. I remember going to K-Mart with my mom and, in New Jersey, to Jamesway (Anybody remember Jamesway? Did they have those in Maryland?), and sometimes we'd stop by the Layaway counter and make a payment on something (I usually

didn't know that the payment was for, as it was often something for Christmas or my birthday.) But I knew, as those payments were being made, that the item was closer and closer to being ours.

When the final payment is made, the item on layaway is redeemed, and it becomes yours. That's one type of redemption, making payment to make something you have set aside, something you have chosen, to be yours.

In the ancient world, slaves and debtors could be redeemed by the payment of the ransom price. Someone held in bondage could be set free, if the full payment was made. If you were enslaved or in deep debt and in need of redemption, the person most likely to redeem you would be a close relative, someone who loved you and identified with you. When you were redeemed by a close relative, this person was often called the "kinsman-redeemer."

A. A Call to the Redeemed

Psalm 107 is a call for the redeemed to give thanks to the Lord. In calling the redeemed to give thanks and sing God's praises, Psalm 107 gives us 4 pictures of redemption – wanderers in the desert being led by a straight path to a city to dwell in, prisoners in irons being set free from the shadow of death, terminally ill sick people being healed and restored to life, and storm-tossed sailors lost at sea being rescued and led to a safe haven. In the original context of Psalm 107, these four pictures are images of the redemption the Lord brought for His people when He restored them to the Promised Land after 70 years of exile. For the people of God today, these are four powerful pictures of salvation.

As we go through these four pictures, we'll see how Jesus fulfills the redemption pictured in these four scenes. I'd also encourage you to think about how we've been singing these stories of redemption this morning in our hymns and worship songs.

Psalm 107 begins with a call, which we used as our Call to Worship this morning:

*Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever!*

² *Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
whom he has redeemed from trouble*

³ *and gathered in from the lands,
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.*

"Let the redeemed of the Lord say so" – Psalm 107 begins Book 5 of the Psalms. Book 4 is largely the song book of exile, while Book 5 is largely the song book of the return to the Promised Land. To see this, look at how Psalm 106 ends and then how Psalm 107 begins –

Psalm 106 ends with a cry for salvation –

*Save us, O LORD our God,
and gather us from among the nations,*

*that we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in your praise.*

Psalm 107 begins with a call to those who have been saved and gathered in in answer to the closing plea of Psalm 106 –

*Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
whom he has redeemed from trouble
and gathered in from the lands,
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.*

For us today, this is a call for all who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, the most precious redemption price, as Peter says in 1 Peter 1:18-19: “*you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*”

To be ransomed and redeemed basically mean the same thing. Ransom focuses on the price paid, while redeemed focuses on the action of being bought back/set free.

We are those gathered to God from the West, from the perspective of Psalm 107. We have been gathered by the Lord into His kingdom from the faraway land across the great Western Ocean – beyond the end of the world.

And so we, who have been redeemed, should give thanks to the Lord. When Psalm 107 opens “*Oh, give thanks to the LORD!*” it’s using a strong call for emphatic and enthusiastic thanksgiving. We are the redeemed of the LORD and we must say so!

B. Four Pictures of Redemption

The Lord is gracious, and He knows we need help to praise and thank Him as we should. We tend to forget, and we need reminders. We tend to be lacking in “scope for the imagination” – to use Anne Shirley’s language – when it comes to understanding and expressing the greatness of our redemption. So God here gives us four vivid pictures of redemption to feed our imaginations and fuel our thanksgiving. In the ESV, each begins with the word “Some . . .” and each ends with a call: “*Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!*” In the middle, the turning point in each story is also the same: “*Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress.*”

Both the ESV and the NIV begin each of these four sections with the word “some,” which is a nice way of identifying the start of each section. However, the word “some” is not in the original Hebrew, and if you have the NASB or the KJV, you’ll see a more accurate reflection of how the Hebrew begins each section. I point this out because one of the side effects of using the word “some” to begin each section is that we can think these are pictures of four different groups of people – Group A was wandering in a desert, Group B was imprisoned, Group C was sick unto death, and Group D was storm-tossed at sea. But that’s probably not the best way to understand this. It’s not four different groups but rather four different pictures of redemption. Also, while some

people have literally, physically experienced these terrible things, the psalm is not meant to be taken as a depiction of literal, physical experiences but as images/pictures of what it means to be lost and then what it means to be redeemed.

I. From a Desert to a City Home, vv. 4-9

The first picture, in verses 4-9, is of wandering in a desert wilderness, hungry and thirsty, lost and alone, before being led by a straight way back to a city home:

- ⁴ Some wandered in desert wastes,
finding no way to a city to dwell in;
⁵ hungry and thirsty,
their soul fainted within them.
⁶ Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.
⁷ He led them by a straight way
till they reached a city to dwell in.
⁸ Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!
⁹ For he satisfies the longing soul,
and the hungry soul he fills with good things.*

Israel wandered in the desert wilderness for forty years before being led by the Lord into the Promised Land, but they were led by God every step of the way, through the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. When we are lost – cut off from the life of God – we are wandering in a spiritual desert, hungry and thirsty for life and righteousness and salvation, and our souls faint within us.

When Jesus came to save us, right after He was baptized by John in the Jordan River, He was led by the Spirit into the desert wilderness of Judea, where He fasted for 40 days and nights, and He was hungry and thirsty and alone.

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. – Luke 4:1-2

He was then tempted by Satan and overcame for us and for our salvation. Jesus physically entered into our spiritual experience, suffering hunger and thirst and loneliness, being severely tempted, so He could overcome the devil for us and could identify more fully with us as our kinsman-redeemer.

God does three wonderful things for us when we are wandering alone in the desert wilderness, hungry and thirsty, our souls fainting within us: He leads us by a straight way, satisfies our souls and He brings us to a city home.

What is the straight way of salvation? Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

What is the satisfaction of our souls? Jesus said, "*I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*" (John 6:35)

What is the city to which God leads us, to be our home? Well, Hebrews 11 tells us of the faith of Abraham, who went out by faith through the wilderness and to the Promised Land: "*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.*" Abraham was not looking for an earthly Promised Land or any earthly City: His eyes of faith were focused on the City of God, the eternal New Jerusalem. We will never be at home until we are at home with the Lord. That home in the City of God, with the people of God, has colonies, outposts here in this world, and they're found in the church. We gather together and we encourage one another in our faith as we continue to be led by the Lord along the straight way of salvation toward our Heavenly Home, the Eternal City of God!

2. From a Dark Prison to Freedom, vv. 10-16

The second picture of redemption is of being brought from a dark dungeon of bondage into freedom:

- ¹⁰ Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death,
prisoners in affliction and in irons,
¹¹ for they had rebelled against the words of God,
and spurned the counsel of the Most High.
¹² So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor;
they fell down, with none to help.
¹³ Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.
¹⁴ He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death,
and burst their bonds apart.
¹⁵ Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!
¹⁶ For he shatters the doors of bronze
and cuts in two the bars of iron.*

When Jesus returned from the desert wilderness, He came to the synagogue in Nazareth, his hometown on the Sabbath Day, and He read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”*

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” – Luke 4:15-21, ESV

Sin enslaves. In John 8, Jesus says, “Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.” But then He says, “If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed.”

When we are lost, not only are we wandering, aimless, hungry, thirsty, but we are also imprisoned by sin, held in bondage, prisoners to a harsh taskmaster who lied to us, trying to convince us that our bondage is really freedom, that our slavery to sin is really self-mastery.

To those imprisoned and enchained, God brings us out of prison and breaks the bondage. He brings us out of prison first, out of the place of condemnation. “*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*” – Romans 8:1. Then, He breaks the bonds of sin that imprison us. We don’t become sin-free, but we become free from the tyrannical oppression, the bondage, the mastery of sin. At times, we may choose our sin and put those chains back on, but Jesus has power to break us free again.

3. From Sickness unto Death to Healing, vv. 17-22

The third picture of redemption is of people sick with a deadly illness through their own foolishness, sick unto death, and then being healed and restored:

*¹⁷ Some were fools through their sinful ways,
and because of their iniquities suffered affliction;*

*¹⁸ they loathed any kind of food,
and they drew near to the gates of death.*

*¹⁹ Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.*

²⁰ He sent out his word and healed them,

and delivered them from their destruction.

*²¹ Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!*

*²² And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving,
and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!*

So, after Jesus fasted in the desert wilderness, and then announced the beginning of His earthly ministry from Isaiah 61, what did He then go about doing?

And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. ³⁹ And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them.

⁴⁰ Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. – Luke 4:38-40, ESV

Being lost in sin is not just the condition of being in a desert wilderness, hungry and thirsty, lost and alone, and it's not just the condition of being in bondage in prison, but it's also to be mortally ill, sick-unto-death. Sin is a fatal illness, that kills us spiritually and that will rob us of all life forever. Jesus is the Great Physician, who heals our sin-sick souls. And one day, He will raise us from the dead, forever healed and wondrously whole in His image perfected forever!!

4. From Storm-Tossed to a Haven, vv. 23-32

Our fourth and final image is that of storm-tossed sailors, frightened and helpless in the powerful grip of the storm:

*²³ Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the great waters;*

*²⁴ they saw the deeds of the LORD,
his wondrous works in the deep.*

*²⁵ For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.*

*²⁶ They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their evil plight;*

*²⁷ they reeled and staggered like drunken men
and were at their wits' end.*

*²⁸ Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.*

*²⁹ He made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.*

*³⁰ Then they were glad that the waters were quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.*

*³¹ Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!*

As Jesus went about the Galilee area, teaching in the synagogues and healing the sick, He also calmed the storms on the Sea of Galilee and rescued His disciples, whose business was on the Sea as professional fishermen, from the terror of the storm:

³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." ³⁶ And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. ³⁷ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" ⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" – Mark 4:35-41, ESV

Sin leaves us storm-tossed at times, doesn't it? When I think of being storm-tossed and sick, I think of some airplane flight experiences I've had when the plane has been tossed around by turbulence. It's a frightening feeling of helplessness. When we're lost in our sin, we're helpless, subject to the turmoil of our emotions and desires, tossed around and unstable. Jesus alone can speak "Peace! Be still!" to our souls and bring stability and security to us.

C. The Power of our Redeemer, vv. 33-42

After giving us these four pictures, Psalm 107 then closes with a section that praises God for His sovereign power to bring about great reversals in both judgment and redemption:

*³³ He turns rivers into a desert,
springs of water into thirsty ground,
³⁴ a fruitful land into a salty waste,
because of the evil of its inhabitants.
³⁵ He turns a desert into pools of water,
a parched land into springs of water.
³⁶ And there he lets the hungry dwell,
and they establish a city to live in;
³⁷ they sow fields and plant vineyards
and get a fruitful yield.
³⁸ By his blessing they multiply greatly,
and he does not let their livestock diminish.

³⁹ When they are diminished and brought low
through oppression, evil, and sorrow,*

- 40 he pours contempt on princes
and makes them wander in trackless wastes;*
- 41 but he raises up the needy out of affliction
and makes their families like flocks.*
- 42 The upright see it and are glad,
and all wickedness shuts its mouth.*

The God who has the power to rescue and redeem His people who cry out to Him from their desperate condition is the same God who has the power to bring down to judgment the arrogant and the wicked who deny Him and continue in their stubborn rebellion against Him.

Attend, Consider & Give Thanks!

This great power of God to both save and judge, to exalt and bring low, to bring refreshment and salvation, but also to bring contempt and humiliation brings about the unexpected but vitally important close of Psalm 107:

- 43 Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things;
let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD.*

Here's the closing application, and it's as simple as it is powerful, as straightforward as it is vital: You have either experienced the redeeming love and power of God or you have not. If you have, you must give Him thanks and praise, not hesitatingly, reluctantly, half-heartedly, but joyfully, gratefully, and powerfully! If you have not yet experienced His redeeming love, you need to cry out to Him, today, for His saving power, for His redeeming love.

At the turning point of each of these four stories, the people cried to the Lord. So, you, too, must cry to the Lord while you still can. Cry to Him in your hunger and thirst, cry to Him in your bondage and distress, cry to Him in your soul's sin-sickness, cry to Him in the storm of your confusion. Cry to Him, and He will save you! Don't neglect your need for salvation or continue to ignore the only One who can save you. Cry out to Him today!